WENDY LEE GRAMM: THE NEXT HILLARY CLINTON?

THE NEW REPUBLIC

APRIL 3, 1995 • $2.95

nne Hollander on Greta Garbo • Jerome Groopman on AIDS hope

CLASS not RACE

A Liberal Case for Junking Old-Style Affirmative Action in Favor ng that Works

[KAHLENBERG]

#BXRKDML ******* 3-DIGIT 757
#7575SAB411RY007# 012996
HO NWRE S00359
AMBASSADOR COLLEGE
ROY HAMMER LIB
PO BOX 111
BIG SANDY TX 75755-0111

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Left to right: Linda McGee, Ronald Thompson, Harold Albritton, Michael Mori

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NO ONE FLIES ALONE.

AMBASSADOR UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

PO Box 111
Big Sandy, TX 75755

Last year, 60% of our sales were to customers outside the U.S., so global competition is a familiar reality for us. But another force may be just as powerful: global cooperation. Canada, Russia, Japan and the countries in the European Space Agency are working with us on the Space Station. And aerospace firms in nations around the world help build our jetliners. Trade works both ways. The more they sell us, the more we sell them. The point, and the paradox, is this: As the world grows smaller, the possibilities grow larger.

BOEING

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TRB®

FROM WASHINGTON

Hollowgramm

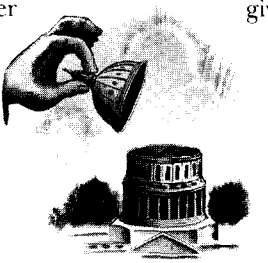
Presumably you've by now heard the story of Phil and Wendy Gramm's first encounter. It was 1969, and Wendy had just interviewed for a job with Texas A&M, where Phil already worked. Before she left, he got her alone for a moment and said, "As a single member of the faculty, I'd be very interested in having you come to Texas A&M." Then, he recalls, "She looked up at me and said, 'Yuck.'" Or, as Wendy recently recalled the incident, "I turn around and say, 'Yuck.'" Or, as Wendy recalled the incident some years ago, "I didn't say it, but I thought, 'Oh, yuck!'" Whatever. Anyway, Phil promptly walked over and told some colleagues that before long he would marry that girl. And you know what? He did.

One reason this story gets endlessly recycled is that it crystallizes the Phil Gramm campaign pitch. He is a man of unvarnished candor and fierce persistence; he tells you what he's going to do (marry you, balance the budget) and then does it, however daunting the odds. And if he seems obnoxious at first—well, like Wendy, you should take another look.

Perhaps the most erudite proponent of this view is David Frum, who recently came out with an *Atlantic Monthly* profile of Gramm that can safely be described as favorable. Indeed, increasingly favorable: in the second paragraph Gramm is said to have made "fewer political compromises than almost anyone else in public life," and by paragraph eleven is "uniquely uncompromising." Gramm's rough-hewn, unflinching conservatism, says Frum, "requires that we rethink everything we believe we know about American politics."

For example: I *believe* I know that American politicians are afraid to attack middle-class entitlements. Think again, says Frum. On Social Security: "Gramm's promise that people who have contributed to the system will get their money back—and his omission of any promise of more—clearly implies that Social Security will play a much smaller role for future retirees than it plays now." Well, maybe. But I'd expect a uniquely uncompromising politician to be a bit more explicit here. I'd also expect him to take advantage of his recent opportunity to clear the matter up on "Meet the Press." But when host Tim Russert mentioned Social Security, Gramm vowed that he'd never touch it to help balance the budget.

Well, then, what about Medicare? According to Frum, Gramm would push for "quadrupling or quintupling" the Medicare deductible, now around $600. Yet when Russert mentioned raising the Medicare deductible, Gramm began shaking his head so manically that for a second I thought my VCR was on the fritz. Gramm did admit that we'll have to "look at" Medicare. But when pressed for details he came up with a homey scenario in which his mother (Florence) might receive an extra $500 per year from the government if she opted for HMO coverage. The government, meanwhile, could afford to pay for the HMO and still pocket a big savings. Everybody wins! And there are other ways, said Gramm, that Florence and the government could both save money by shedding Medicare red tape in favor of proven private-sector schemes.



Some money, maybe, but not nearly as much as Gramm hopes. His argument begins with his assertion that Medicare costs are growing at 10 percent a year, whereas health insurance premiums for the "average" American are holding constant. First of all, this isn't even close to true. What Gramm may mean is that for *certain kinds* of private-sector health plans, premiums aren't growing—large corporate plans, for example. But corporations are holding down premiums in part by cutting services or raising out-of-pocket costs—as with, say, expanded deductibles of the sort that Gramm is manifestly not eager to champion.

HMOs, too, have held premiums about constant lately. But they've done so partly with a de facto filter; they tend to attract healthier-than-average people. And presumably Gramm doesn't favor cutting Medicare costs by screening out unhealthy people. Further, HMOs engage in subtle "rationing." If you've got a one in 1,000 chance of having a brain tumor, don't expect an HMO to suggest a costly brain scan; and every once in a while (about one time in 1,000, I'd guess), a brain tumor thus gets missed. Now, some analysts, such as Henry Aaron of Brookings, say rationing may have merit in a world where technology generates so many high-cost, low-benefit procedures. Indeed, rationing may be especially pertinent to holding down costs for the elderly. Well then, if Gramm is so enamored of the HMO model, and is so famously forthright, will he come out for explicit Medicare "rationing"? Nope. He used this very scare-word to help bludgeon the Clinton health-care plan to death.

Admittedly, the economics of HMOs are subtle, and maybe we shouldn't expect politicians to invest as much time in grasping them as academics do. The reason I got my hopes up was that Gramm is a trained economist whose mind, Frum says, "burns at a higher wattage than that of any other senator save Daniel Patrick Moynihan." (Pity the *Atlantic* fact-checker who got saddled with that one.)

The moment did finally come on "Meet the Press" when Gramm spoke about sacrifice. "There's going to be some bitter pills to swallow," he said. "It is not going to be painless to"—go ahead, Doc, give it to us straight—"to reform welfare." *Welfare?* Leaving aside the fact that welfare is a dinky part of the budget, how courageous is it for someone trying to secure the right flank of the Republican Party to suggest sacrifice on the part of welfare recipients? There goes the Harlem vote.

Perhaps with an eye to the general election, Gramm has lately tried to get a bit cuddlier on this issue. Right after demanding that welfare mothers "get out of the wagon" and help the rest of us pull, he adds that we should demand this because "we love them." Isn't that nice? Now, there certainly is a good argument for "tough love." But, first of all, most of the people who applaud Gramm's wildly popular "wagon" line are at that moment feeling something other than love for welfare mothers. Second, "tough love" that actually works would, in the short run, cost more than welfare itself—in wage subsidies, child care, etc. (See my colleague Mickey Kaus's elegant blueprint for welfare reform, somewhat misleadingly titled *The End of Equality*.) If Republicans want to try to balance the budget on the backs of poor people, that's a futile endeavor they're welcome to try; but to claim that they will in the process save the underclass is a lie that is offensive even by Washington standards.

Frum, in his book *Dead Right*, dissed just about every living Republican for insufficient seriousness about spending cuts. Now, finally, comes someone who, even by Frum's stringent standards, is worthy of the conservative mantle. And the closer this savior gets to real power, the more closely he resembles a generic Washington pol, demanding sacrifice from everyone who stands no chance of ever voting for him. Yuck.

ROBERT WRIGHT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

APRIL 3, 1995

FOUNDED 1914
WASHINGTON, D.C.
ISSUE 4,185

Editor-in-Chief and Chairman
MARTIN PERETZ

Editor
ANDREW SULLIVAN

Literary Editor
LEON WIESELTIER

Executive Editor
MARGARET TALBOT

Senior Editors
FRED BARNES, ANN HULBERT, MICKEY KAUS, MICHAEL KINSLEY, WESTON KOSOVA, CHARLES LANE, MICHAEL LEWIS, ROBERT WRIGHT

Managing Editor
DAVID GREENBERG

Legal Affairs
JEFFREY ROSEN

Films
STANLEY KAUFFMANN

Theater
ROBERT BRUSTEIN

Poetry
MARY JO SALTER

Dance
MINDY ALOFF

Photography
LUC SANTE

Art
JED PERL

Contributing Editors
ELIOT A. COHEN, STANLEY CROUCH, ANNA HUSARSKA, JOHN B. JUDIS, CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER, VINT LAWRENCE, DOUGLAS G. McGRATH, LOUIS MENAND, ROGER ROSENBLATT, MAGGIE SCARF, ROBERT SHAPIRO, RONALD STEEL, E.V. THAW, TOM TOLES, TATYANA TOLSTAYA, MICHAEL WALZER, JACOB WEISBERG, SEAN WILENTZ, ALAN WOLFE, C. VANN WOODWARD

Associate Editor
RUTH SHALIT

Assistant Literary Editor
NADER MOUSAVIZADEH

Design Consultant
ERIC BAKER

Editorial-Corporate Coordinator
LAURA E. OBOLENSKY

Production Director
BRUCE STEINKE

Production Assistant
HENRY RIGGS

Assistant Editor
DEBRA DUROCHER

Staff Writer
HANNA ROSIN

Reporter-Researchers
JENNIFER BRADLEY, ANDY LAMEY, DANTE RAMOS

President
JEFFREY L. DEARTH

Publisher
JOAN M. STAPLETON

Associate Publisher-Marketing
PAUL J. VIZZA

Associate Publisher-Circulation
PEGGY JARVIS FERRIN

Associate Publisher-Advertising
JAMES J. McCABE

Controller
JEAN GANDY

Advertising Director
JENNIFER BARRETT

Accounting Manager
CHRISTINA R. BONIFER

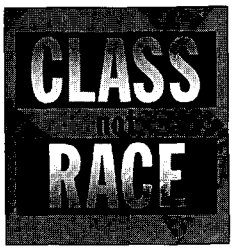
Circulation Manager
CECELIA M. STEPHENS

Advertising Assistant
DIANE M. SEBOLD

Accounting Assistant
JACQUELYN M. PASCALE

Circulation Assistant
CAROLYN BERRY

Back Issues and Reception
DORIS RIDLEY



Cover by Eric Baker for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Article on page 21.

4 **ROBERT WRIGHT** TRB: HOLLOWGRAMM Just how will Phil Gramm balance the budget?

6 **CORRESPONDENCE** In defense of Cornel West, Christina Jeffrey replies &c.

9 **THE EDITORS** A MATTER OF AID What works—and doesn't—in the Middle East.

10 **NOTEBOOK** Bill Clinton's Anglophobia, Jenny Jones's "excess" &c.

14 **STEPHANIE GUTMANN** CONSUMED: RUSTICATED The craze for beat-up furniture.

15 **MASHA GESSEN** MOSCOW POSTCARD: GOOSE STEPPES A Cossacks' confab.

16 **JENNIFER BRADLEY** HILLARY'S NIGHTMARE Is Wendy Gramm Phil's secret weapon?

18 **JEROME GROOPMAN** AIDS HOPE Even as much of society has given up on AIDS, medical researchers find cause for optimism. A report from the front.

21 **RICHARD KAHLENBERG** CLASS, NOT RACE Race-based preferences have all but collapsed. Instead of scrapping affirmative action, it's time to turn to something that gets to the heart of the inequities in American society.

28 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ON FILMS: PECULIARITIES *Farinelli* is frenetic and, finally, boring.

30 **ROBERT BRUSTEIN** ON THEATER: ASPECTS OF LOVE AND COMPASSION Shylock struggles to keep a new *Merchant of Venice* afloat; *Love! Valour! Compassion!* sinks.

32 **ANNE HOLLANDER** THE FACE *Garbo* by Barry Paris

35 **TONY JUDT** LOW MARX *The Wager of Lucien Goldmann* by Mitchell Cohen

39 **NADER MOUSAVIZADEH** STRANGERS IN PARADISE *Borderliners* by Peter Høeg

40 **VICKIE KARP** POEM *One Hundred Well-Cut Leaves*

42 **CHARLES LANE** WASHINGTON DIARIST: GOOD COPS, BAD COPS

THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 212, Number 14, Issue 4,185, April 3, 1995. (Printed in the U.S. on March 15, 1995.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 9 & 16, July 17 & 24, Aug. 21 & 28, and Sept. 18 & 25, 1995) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. The New Republic Advertising Sales Office (212) 702-4882. Yearly subscriptions, $69.97; foreign, $99.97; Canada, $84.97. Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage & handling). © 1995 by The New Republic, Inc. (ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, CD-ROM, issue and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Internet mail address: editors@tnr.com Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. *Unsolicited manuscripts* can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscribers: Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 602, Mount Morris, IL 61054. For subscription problems call 800-827-1289.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CORRESPONDENCE

Decline of Cornel West

To the editors:
When I saw your cover announcing "The Decline of the Black Intellectual," I reacted with dismay. When I read Leon Wieseltier's attack on Cornel West, dismay turned to disgust ("All and Nothing at All," March 6). Wieseltier's ruthless approach to West's work and life was appalling. Is an old ad hominem attack, which covers everything from West's taste in clothes to his religious faith, the way to open an intellectual argument?

"Where are the private intellectuals?" Wieseltier asks at last—recommending that West give up the public life and go home and think about it some more. Is this what America needs now—more silence about public matters? Or is this recommendation reserved only for the left? West's business has been to keep contact open among racial and class communities. If West seems too active on the public scene, it is because he is overstretched, attempting the work of a movement.

BOGDAN DENITCH
New York, New York

To the editors:
Having learned a lot about contemporary America from *Race Matters*, and having often assigned *The American Evasion of Philosophy* to my students, I was surprised to find that Leon Wieseltier thinks Cornel West's books "almost completely worthless." I commend the Emerson and Dewey chapters of *The American Evasion*.

Wieseltier is right that West finds "the best of religions" in their approximations to social democracy. So does the whole "social gospel" tradition in Christian theology. That view of the function of religion seems to me at least as plausible as Wieseltier's Kierkegaardian view.

RICHARD RORTY
Charlottesville, Virginia

To the editors:
I must applaud Leon Wieseltier. As an Afro-American Studies concentrator at Harvard, I have suffered through enough hermetic theorizing to realize that modern black intellectuals have made themselves completely irrelevant to the American experience. For all his good intentions, West embodies everything that is wrong with his argot-spewing generation of self-aggrandizing intellects—gross complacency, misplaced intellectual energy, careerism and slavish imitation of popular theory. West might claim to champion the black "proletariat," yet only a seventh-year graduate student could understand the majority of his work. Perhaps, a new generation of black intellectuals will rise in the wake of West and most of his counterparts and produce original theory capable of graduating from the ivory tower and entering the real world.

NAME WITHHELD
Cambridge, Massachusetts

To the editors:
Certainly the loss of Langston Hughes and the bizarre rantings of Cornel West do not signal any trend; decidedly not a decline of intellectuals among people of color. Is a black intellectual defined by an erudite, published person of color who confines his or her discourse to matters of civil rights? There are numerous intellectually gifted black Americans who are quite tired of being "forced" to focus their output to such matters; infuriated by the "best black syndrome." Such learned individuals as Thomas Sowell, Shelby Steele, Julius Lester and Stephen Carter come to mind. I hope white America and the leaders of the traditional civil rights movement "allow" such individuals to fully express their intellectual prowess.

EDWARD T. NEELY
San Antonio, Texas

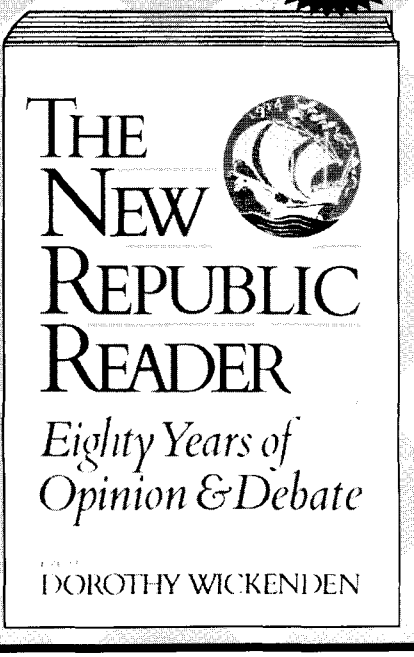
ENJOY A COLLECTION OF THE BEST PIECES FROM THE COUNTRY'S PREEMINENT JOURNAL OF OPINION.

JUST PUBLISHED!

Here is the first major anthology of essays from America's most provocative political and cultural magazine. *The New Republic Reader* traces the evolution of twentieth-century liberal thought and the magazine's role in shaping it. It begins with the outbreak of World War I and ends with the collapse of totalitarianism and includes essays from dozens of the country's preeminent intellectuals, public figures, and journalists, including:

Rebecca West • J. M. Keynes • Virginia Woolf • Winston Churchill • George Orwell • W. H. Auden • Reinhold Niebuhr • Walter Lippmann • Adam Michnik • John Dewey • Margaret Sanger • Gunnar Myrdal • Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. • Michael Kinsley • Irving Howe • Edmund Wilson • and many more!

"A rich repository of writings that span the turmoils and triumphs of the 20th century."
—John Patrick Diggins, Los Angeles Times



A New Republic Book
BasicBooks
A Division of HarperCollins*Publishers*
Available in Canada from HarperCollins*CanadaLtd*

At bookstores or call 800-331-3761

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To the editors:
Whether Leon Wieseltier agrees with Cornel West's Marxism, his emphasis on structural rather than purely individualistic explanations for the plight of the urban poor is of little consequence as a basis for substantial critique.

The strongest critique of West is that his tremendous breadth of interest often leaves his analysis lacking in depth.

However, West's generalism may be a source of rare insight. Against the narrow individualism of black neo-cons and the totalitarian nationalism of Farrakhan, West demands that blacks and the rest of us seek a new synthesis balancing values of community and culture with free individual inquiry and an open-ended vision of personal development. We could use more shallowness of this kind.

J.P. McCABE
New York, New York

To the editors:
In "All and Nothing at All" Leon Wieseltier tries to undermine Cornel West's legitimacy as a public intellectual with contradictory techniques: he quotes West's scholarly writings out of context, and pretends to deconstruct them for us poor schnooks; then he claims that such discourse is irrelevant for social change, anyway.

Here, he misses the point. The public does not care if Wieseltier or, for that matter, Richard Rorty thinks that West has his Gramsci right; that is indeed for philosophers to debate in their journals. The public responds to West's ability to fuse his knowledge of religion, philosophy, politics and the arts into a vision for social change. As a minister, a scholar and a black person in late-twentieth-century America, West makes the world and its ideas available to all. Nowhere in Wieseltier's rant does he even attempt to account for West's presence as a speaker, his charisma as a teacher or his power as a preacher; or for the fact that his speeches draw a standing-room-only crowd hungry for his message of change and his insistence on self-love and dignity for black, brown and white people.

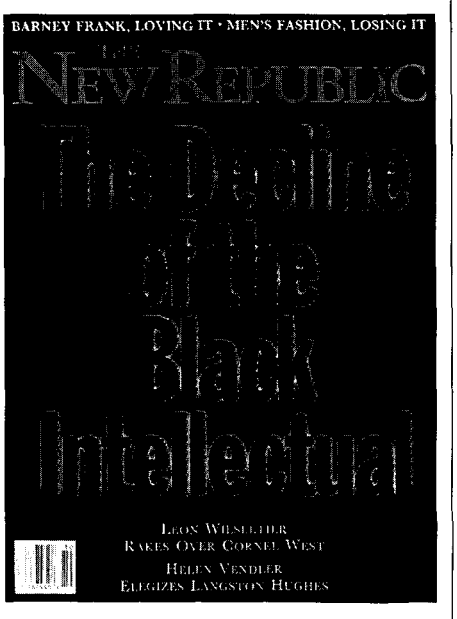
ELIZABETH MAGUIRE
New York, New York

Facing facts

To the editors:
Deborah Lipstadt's reference to me in "Not Facing History" (March 6) adds another layer of myth and legend to my tale.

My initial review of Facing History and Ourselves, the one which was leaked in 1987, was of the *grant proposal* for the program for teachers. Thus I was not "wrong" about the absence of treatment of Nazi ideology. Why would I have said it was lacking if it were there? Isn't this *prima facie* evidence that I did not see the curriculum materials? I regret I do not have that grant proposal. I was asked to destroy it at the time.

Lipstadt rebukes me for not offering constructive criticisms to improve Holocaust education. Although my attention had not been directed to this topic before the grant review episode, I have spoken and written about it many times since. For example, in a March 1991 letter to *Commentary*, I wrote: "In analyzing the universe of programs available for Holocaust education, it seems to me that Lucy Dawidowicz has done what the Department of Education should have done years ago, instead of simply rejecting Facing History's annual applications for funding.... The Department could


BARNEY FRANK, LOVING IT · MEN'S FASHION, LOSING IT
THE NEW REPUBLIC
The Decline of the Black Intellectual
LEON WIESELTIER
TAKES OVER CORNEL WEST
HELEN VENDLER
ELEGIZES LANGSTON HUGHES

have provided information for schools about other programs that had already been developed and disseminated."

CHRISTINA F. JEFFREY
Kennesaw, Georgia

To the editors:
One can only hope that Deborah Lipstadt's analysis of the fatal flaws in *Facing History and Ourselves* will stimulate secondary school teachers to rethink what contemporary implications should be derived from a study of the Holocaust.

Long overdue is thinking about exactly where in the social studies curriculum the Holocaust is best studied. Perhaps it is the time to take it out of "moral" education and put it where it belongs—in the history curriculum and as part of European or world history. The move would do much to prevent its abuse, exploitation or trivialization. It would also help teachers connect it with the establishment of the state of Israel, a vital historical connection that is completely ignored in Facing History's manuals.

SANDRA STOTSKY
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Sour krauts

To the editors:
When the Hitler resistance exhibit that Jon Wiener writes about ("Good Germans," March 6) opened at the Library of Congress last summer, *The Washington Post* ran a critical review that contended, inaccurately, that the German ambassador "leaned on" Librarian of Congress James Billington to display the exhibition. Wiener writes: "Billington initially refused to accept the show; but political pressure from the Bonn government prevailed."

The *Post* published a corrective letter on July 31 from Helen Dalrymple, the library's acting public affairs officer: "The librarian never discussed holding the exhibit with the ambassador or with any other German official. As our people told the writer, there was no 'political pressure.' Rather, Fritz Stern, the noted Columbia University historian, had urged Dr. Billington in January [1994] that we consider taking it on.... In April, told by his staff that a summer hole had opened up in the schedule, Dr. Billington gave a go-ahead, subject to the usual library procedures:... outside 'vetting' of the text, a seminar allowing all points of view and library staff collaboration on the final show." Wiener quoted selectively from Dalrymple's letter, omitting facts that refuted his "political pressure" theory.

PETER BRAESTRUP
Washington, D.C.

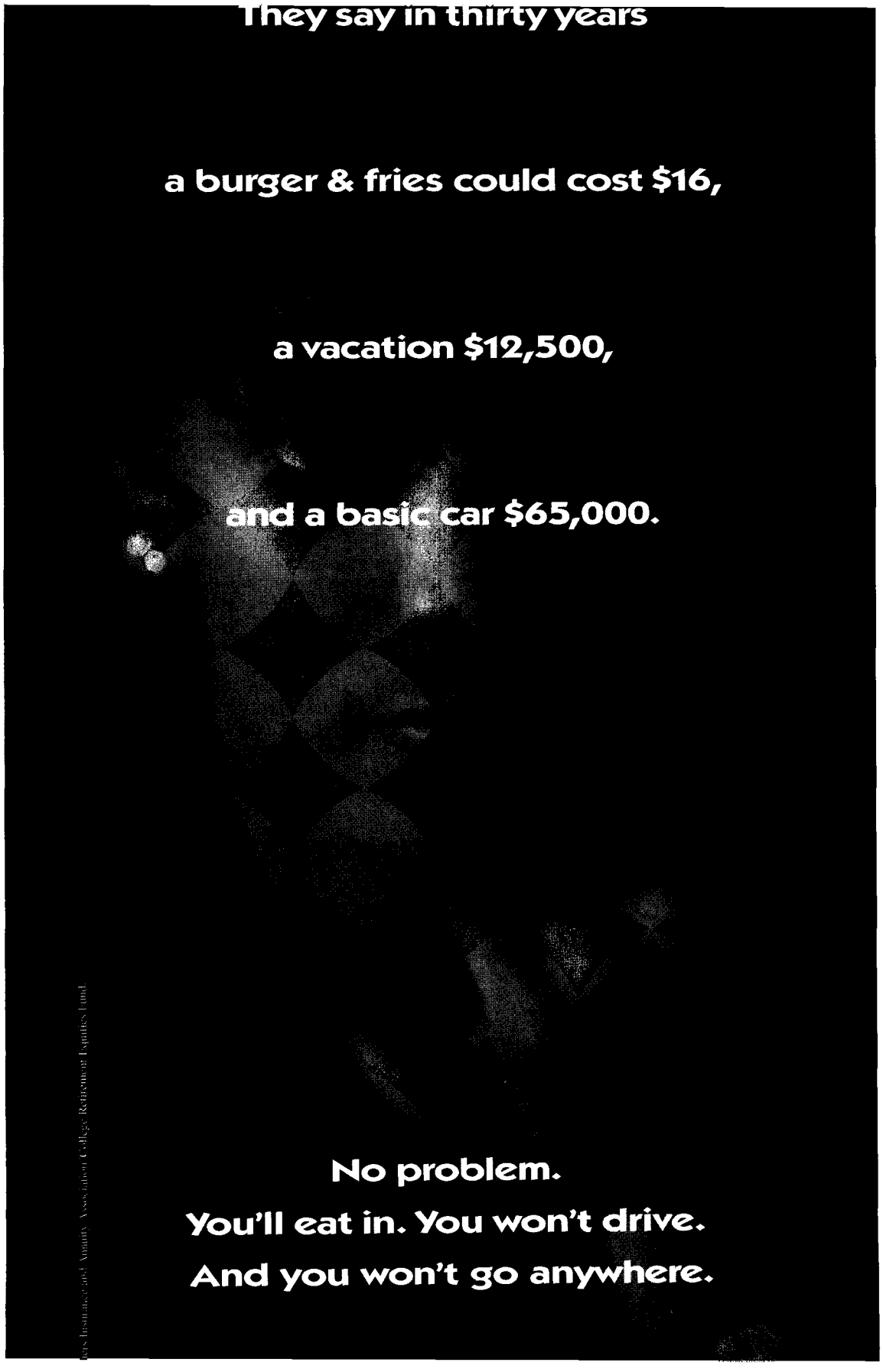
Plain English

To the editors:
THE NEW REPUBLIC takes issue with my support of bilingual education. (Notebook, March 6) Fair enough. It doesn't necessarily follow that "the least damning explanation" of my support for bilingual education is that the National Association of Bilingual Educators held its annual convention in Phoenix. I have a public record of support for bilingual education dating from my first year in Congress, about twelve years before the association chose Phoenix as its convention site.

I was unaware that a border state senator's concern for reducing illegal immigration was equal to joining the "drumbeat against immigrants" generally. I thought my opposition to California's Proposition 187 and to efforts to hold a similar referendum in Arizona might have shown a more generous view.

JOHN McCAIN
United States Senator
Washington, D.C.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED


They say in thirty years
a burger & fries could cost $16,
a vacation $12,500,
and a basic car $65,000.
No problem.
You'll eat in. You won't drive.
And you won't go anywhere.

TIAA-CREF.
Proven
Solutions
To Last
a Lifetime.

Granted, sitting around the house may not be your idea of the perfect retirement. But what's your choice when inflation is slowly but surely eroding the value of your nest egg? Talk to TIAA-CREF. We offer investment, insurance, and personal savings plans that can help you outpace inflation and build the rewarding future you deserve. Maybe that's why we've become the largest retirement system in the world. To hear more, call 1 800 226-0147 for your free Personal Investing Kit. After all, you've always had places to go and things to do. And why should it be any different when you retire? TIAA-CREF. Financial services exclusively for people in education and research.

TIAA CREF

Ensuring the future for those who shape it.℠

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE NEW REPUBLIC

APRIL 3, 1995

A MATTER OF AID

Warren Christopher returned last week to the Middle East, the one place in the world where the disputants are sometimes willing to pretend he has a role to play in their lives. One reason they do is cash. Washington is being blamed for the lack of money to lubricate the peace process in the form of aid to the Palestinian National Authority. Much of this cash, however, was promised by us in the name of other countries, like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. But Saudis and Kuwaitis have their own reasons for being skeptical of Palestinian promises. If Riyadh and the emirates are not exactly keen on funding a regional bank, it is less because they still hold some grudge against Israel than because they do not want to bankroll the PLO. And they will not bankroll it because they do not trust it.

One can remonstrate with them the same way Shimon Peres does against his Israeli skeptics, that is to say: If not Yasir Arafat, who? But a Hamas victory among Palestinians is not what threatens the pro-Western Arabs. What does threaten them is Islamic extremism at home—and in ideologically pivotal countries like Egypt and Algeria. Arafat, even with a few hundred million dollars in his Zurich bank accounts (or actually spent on infrastructure in the self-rule areas), does not defend them against the tide.

In any case, it is not the failure of one more-or-less interested country or another to ante up cash that has impeded the peace process. The fact is that nobody can tell for sure whether the Palestinian polity is ready at all for a reasonable peace with Israel. And even though Christopher has now promised a bit more money for some projects in Gaza, the concrete goodwill of others depends on clearing up what remains, at best, ambiguous.

The most important goodwill on which the Palestinians depend is that of the Israelis. Israel cannot be expected to keep its checkpoints open to Palestinian workers when those checkpoints are an invitation to suicidal terrorists. But one should expect from Jerusalem the map which defines Israel's view of the peace with which it can live. Fearful of both its left and right, the government has never drawn this map for all to see. The fiction that the map awaits negotiations down the line is just that, a fiction.

No existing Arab state should be expected to assent to this map right now. It has been hard enough for some of them to accept that Israel actually exists. But the Palestinians should not be indulged, and certainly not by us, in believing that in the future, they will get much more than the map envisions, which is to say a limited region encompassing all of Gaza and the Arab-populated parts of the West Bank. Jerusalem will remain under Israeli sovereignty with Muslim holy sites being under Muslim jurisdiction. To promise more is to guarantee that, after all of Israel's concessions have been made, the character of the conflict will be unchanged.

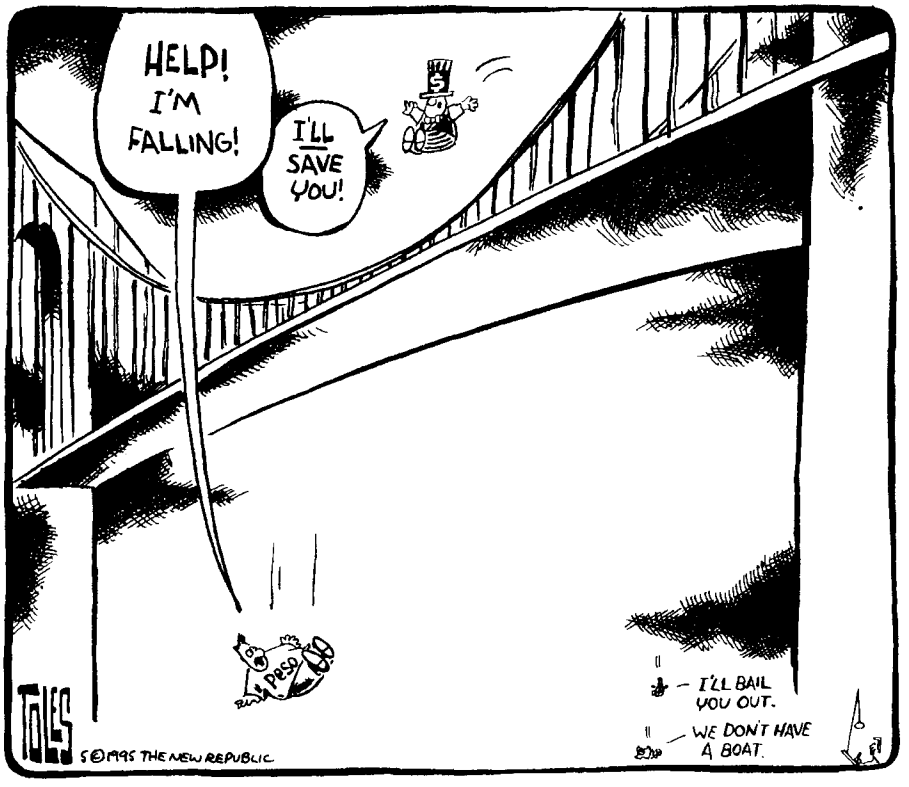
There are Arab countries worthy of international and U.S. support—namely those front-line states which have not played the politically enticing incendiary game of siding with the Palestinians on behalf of impossible goals. Jordan is one such state. The president has pledged to cancel its debt to the United States. But, alas, there are some Republicans who are balking even at this. A moderate state in the region is rare and precious. It should be bolstered with economic and military aid. Better the secretary of state spend his sparse cachet on Capitol Hill arguing for money to the Hashemites than for money to the PLO.

No such special deference should be paid to Egypt, which, while being formally at peace with Israel, has still stirred the tempests. Egypt is on the administration's wish list to receive $2.1 billion in the coming year, this after George Bush annulled Cairo's entire debt to the United States as recompense for a few of its soldiers spraining their ankles in the Gulf war. It doesn't deserve this vast sum. Cairo has specialized in keeping its peace with Israel very cold. It does not really trade with Israel (its purchases amounting to roughly half of what Uruguay spends there); and it has frozen scientific and cultural exchanges. The press is routinely anti-Semitic. All of this has been so for the more than fifteen years since Egypt won back the Sinai. But, of late, the Mubarak mischief has grown. In the guise of helping Arafat against his fanatic enemies, Egypt has given cover to his own maximalist ambitions, both territorial and political. And now, Hosni Mubarak has begun to hold the precarious peace prospects hostage to Israel renouncing its nuclear option. This is a step too far. The fact that Israel has the bomb is the only assurance reasonable Arab societies have that an unreasonable one won't target them. Egypt knows that. It's time we gave them an incentive to admit it. A symbolic cut in aid might be just the lever. •

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTEBOOK

SIC TRANSIT: After the Canadian government announced it would issue a two-dollar coin, Canadians debated whether it should bear the image of a donut, of pirogi or of Leonard Cohen.... Manhattan salesman Joel Levy waved a $50 bill at a woman who arrived at his apartment building and repeatedly tried to trade money for sex with her in his building's elevator, thinking she was the prostitute he had invited to his home by telephone. The woman, a prosecutor in the Brooklyn district attorney's office, did not accept and had him arrested for sexual assault.... All seven Democratic candidates in Rhode Island's local elections, including six incumbents, missed the deadline to nominate themselves to run for office.... *The Hill*, a Washington newspaper, published a correction that read, "Last week, *The Hill* erroneously reported that Sen. Larry Pressler (R-S.D.) married his dogs in a mock ceremony, which in fact did not occur."... In a poll of 100,000 Prodigy online users, 45 percent said they would rather be seated next to a screaming baby on an airplane than next to "The McLaughlin Group" host John McLaughlin.... Mario Cuomo promised that his impending talk-radio show would contain "not talk-talk, but thought-talk."



NEWS FROM ABROAD:

One Man mourns His Dog

—*The Northern Times* of Scotland, February 17.

Cement supplies seen as adequate

—*The Bangkok Post*, January 28.

(Thanks to Bill Gifford of Washington, D.C., and Kyle Smith of New York, New York.)

HATE CRIME: "DID JENNY GO TOO FAR?" inquired *The New York Post*, with its usual blend of directness and irrelevance. The headline referred to an incident on "The Jenny Jones Show," a television talk show which features grotesque and embarrassing encounters between shameless strangers. This time, it was a show based on the theme of "Secret Admirers." Everything was peachy until a man, Jonathan Schmitz, discovered on the air that his secret admirer was another man, Scott Amedure. Days later, Schmitz shot Amedure dead in revenge. The Oakland County prosecutor articulated a disturbingly common response to the incident. He told the *Post* that the show "ambushed this defendant.... They used a ruse to humiliate an individual on national television, and as a result one person is dead and the other faces life imprisonment without parole." The more august *New York Times* followed this spin with an inquiry into reckless talk shows. Excuse us? The issue here has nothing to do with talk shows. It's the entire premise that what Amedure did to Scott was in any way "humiliating." It's the deranged notion that male-male love is so abominable that its revelation can justifiably provoke murderous rage. The one slim solace from this horrific story is that it illustrates just how deep and merciless hatred of homosexuals can still be.

OUT ON A LIMB:

Vasectomy should be a man's personal decision

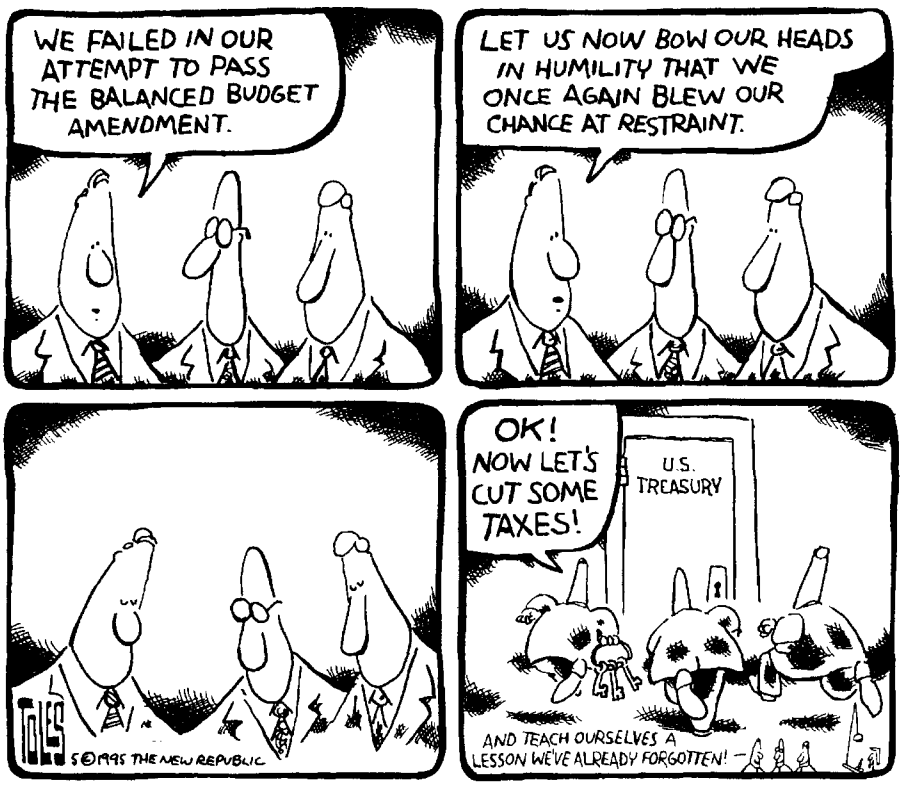
—*Detroit Free Press*, March 5.

(Thanks to Pete Waldmeir of Detroit, Michigan.)

RHODES TO NOWHERE: No doubt the experience of being a Rhodes Scholar is enough to sour anyone on the British, but Bill Clinton's Anglophobia seems to be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

getting a little out of hand. His decision to lionize Gerry Adams, the leader of Sinn Fein, by allowing him to raise funds in the United States last week and inviting him as a guest to the White House, makes little sense. Adams is a front-man for the Irish Republican Army and so deserves some credit for the progress that has recently been made in defusing the conflict in Northern Ireland. But so, too, do the Unionists, who, by and large, have greeted the recent framework agreement between Britain and Ireland with admirable calm. So, too, do the more moderate Republican leaders, Irish Prime Minister John Bruton and the much-maligned British prime minister, John Major. The latter two are the real heroes of progress. Major in particular has walked a tightrope within his own party to get the agreement this far; and he removed 400 more troops from Ulster this week. The IRA, in contrast, has still refused to disarm substantially, and is quietly reserving the right to reignite its terrorism, if the framework agreement collapses. The money Adams is raising in this country merely makes this threat more credible. Bill Clinton may believe he is encouraging peace. In fact, he is creating a subtle new incentive for violence.

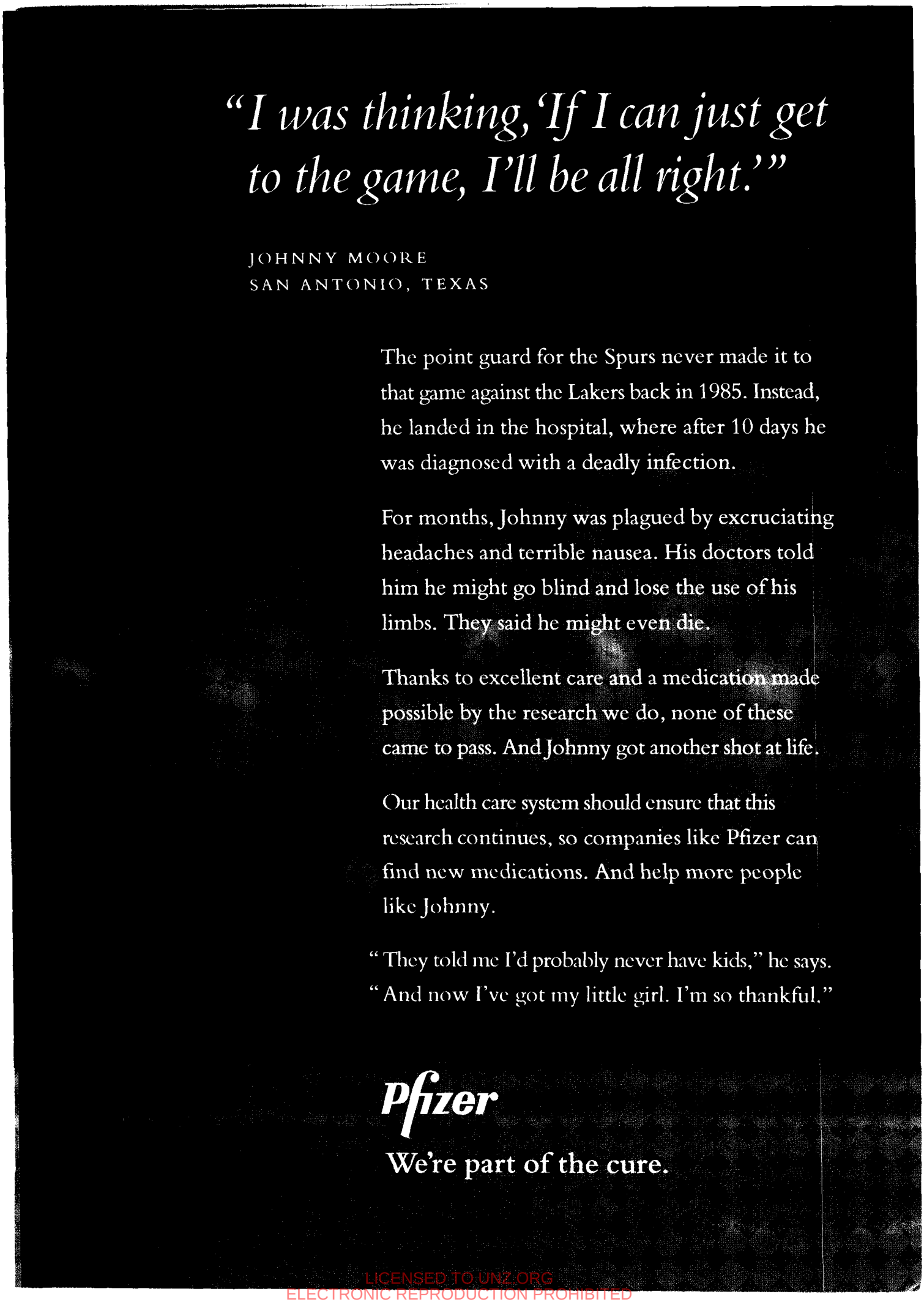

WE FAILED IN OUR ATTEMPT TO PASS THE BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT.
LET US NOW BOW OUR HEADS IN HUMILITY THAT WE ONCE AGAIN BLEW OUR CHANCE AT RESTRAINT.
TOLES
©1995 THE NEW REPUBLIC
OK! NOW LET'S CUT SOME TAXES!
U.S. TREASURY
AND TEACH OURSELVES A LESSON WE'VE ALREADY FORGOTTEN!

AND YOU CAN KEEP YOUR $20 MILLION: At first glance, Yale University's decision to return a $20 million gift that was earmarked for a Western civilization curriculum sounded pretty stupid—another self-defeating instance of weak-kneed university administrators capitulating to the grousing of multiculti professors. But the reason, it turns out, had more to do with the flakiness of the donor, oil billionaire Lee M. Bass, than with any mythic dominance of tenured radicals among the faculty. The endowment of a Western civ course initially did stir debate—in part because Yale already has more than 100 courses on the rather broad topic, including a special intensive "Directed Studies" course in literature, philosophy and politics for first-year students—but administrators remained committed to implementing Bass's wishes. According to *The New York Times*, it was only when Bass, after hearing about faculty discontent with his stipulations, decided he wanted to approve the faculty for the curriculum that Yale balked. Understandably. No university can retain its integrity if it allows fat-cat donors to dictate who can teach which courses. Even to suggest such an intrusion on academic freedom makes one's jaw drop. It's sad to see well-intended money for education fall victim to trifling Culture Wars. But not if the alternative is to put intellectual inquiry up for sale.

D.C. R.I.P.: In April of last year, the head of the District of Columbia's subsidized housing program and her deputy were arrested after a two-year investigation revealed rampant corruption in their department. In his indictment, U.S. Attorney Eric Holder charged that of 400 new rent vouchers given out by the Subsidized Housing Administration since 1990, only about ten were awarded to eligible poor families who had waited their turn and did not pay bribes. Because of the bribery scheme, *The Washington Post* reported, about 11,000 families who qualified for subsidies to help pay their rent had been kept waiting for as long as seven years with little chance of getting help. In January a grand jury convicted the two women, Cheryl Walker and Jennifer Gatling, on the grounds that they "corruptly did demand, seek, receive, accept and agree to receive" bribes in exchange for housing assistance. Another story of the D.C. bureaucracy's amazing decadence and corruption? It gets better. Because personnel officials waited until February 23 to serve them with notices of termination, Gatling and Walker remain on the job and continue to draw salaries of up to $60,000 per year. You'd think that if a person is arrested for misconduct on the job, he or she would be dismissed immediately—particularly when that misconduct involves taking advantage of poor people and breaking the law. Not in Washington. "All civil avenues open to her will be explored in contesting her termination," Walker's attorney told the *Post* this week. Receivership, anyone? •

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED


"I was thinking, 'If I can just get to the game, I'll be all right.'"
JOHNNY MOORE
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS
The point guard for the Spurs never made it to that game against the Lakers back in 1985. Instead, he landed in the hospital, where after 10 days he was diagnosed with a deadly infection.
For months, Johnny was plagued by excruciating headaches and terrible nausea. His doctors told him he might go blind and lose the use of his limbs. They said he might even die.
Thanks to excellent care and a medication made possible by the research we do, none of these came to pass. And Johnny got another shot at life.
Our health care system should ensure that this research continues, so companies like Pfizer can find new medications. And help more people like Johnny.
"They told me I'd probably never have kids," he says. "And now I've got my little girl. I'm so thankful."
Pfizer
We're part of the cure.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RUSTICATED

By Stephanie Gutmann

What symbol could more accurately reflect a time that has no ideas of its own, yet frantically aspires to renounce the moneyed crassness of the 1980s? Try furniture-stripping. There's nary a decorated interior these days that isn't testimony to a flurry of veneer-stripping, sanding and hand-rubbing. Accessorizers are eschewing tony decoration in favor of beating bedsteads with chains (a.k.a. "distressing" or "weathering") to achieve the Rustic look. The point is to take country-style furniture and then rely on the evocative qualities of chipped and peeled paint, splintered wood and rusted metal to achieve, in urban mayhem, the feel of a humble provincial cottage surrounded by wind-tossed moors.

There is Julian Schnabel in the pages of *Vogue* displaying the apogee of Rustic in his cavernous Greenwich Village apartment. There is Pottery Barn, a home furnishing chain for stroller people, with close to sixty stores in cities such as Boston and Seattle. Catalog copy gushes about paint jobs that have been "allowed to age gracefully" and "floral prints that have been washed by the sun," i.e. faded. There is the mass-marketer Spiegel blaring "RUSTIC!" in the pages of *its* winter catalog along with photos of distressed wood cabinets and rusted candlesticks. There is Crate & Barrel, the newly opened Madison Avenue superstore, featuring its "Rustic Collection"—lots of worm-eaten wood and "hand-distressed" dining room sets.

Actually, I love the Rustic look. The "washed" paint finishes are comforting. They're not threatening or cold like chrome or vinyl or that anal-retentive streamlined Danish stuff that was everywhere a few years ago. The fashion reminds me of the way my first apartment looked when I bought everything I owned at tag sales or found it on curbs waiting for the dump truck.

A lot of people apparently have the same reaction. The big seller this season at Pottery Barn is the Thomas Bed ($699 for queen-size). "Planks of pine form a sturdy bed with the character of an old family heirloom. The wood is first painted a warm, creamy white then hand-rubbed for a distressed look," promises the catalog. The actual bed frame is a nice nineteenth-century farmhouse style with wide slats and simple, unornamented posts, but what they call a "distressed" paint job is what I'd call banged-up. Chips are missing from the paint and it has big scuffed patches where the dark wood shows right through—the kind of thing I'd swear to refinish someday. Actually it looks like it's just survived a speed-crazed, graduate-student tie-the-furniture-to-the-roof-of-the-car-and-bump-it-up-five-flights moving job.

Valerie Wilson, an interior designer in Manhattan, argues that the Rustic look is "a reaction to newness, a way of giving things a history—in the same way that people started buying old photographs around five years ago and having someone else's whole family on their wall. It's another trend for baby-boomers that gives them a sense of place and history and time." Another city designer says he gets that warm, gooey college-days vibe when he walks into homes that are "rusticated" (his word). "I don't know why it's being purchased now other than there's a kind of collective memory happening," he says.

In painter Julian Schnabel's case, the collective memory is very collective. Here are exposed metal pipes blotched with rust, tattered velvet curtains that actually appear to be molding in places, warped and blotchily painted spindle chairs that look like they were carted away in the back of a station wagon from one of those bedraggled flea markets in upstate New York. "Hyper-decayed, totally rotting," says Manhattan-based interior designer M. Scott Marks, who has seen the apartment in photos.

Of course Schnabel was able to afford Real Old Stuff, which has gotten astronomically dear. To find the splintery bench and rusted door Schnabel's designers scoured places like Urban Archaeology in Soho, a four-story emporium featuring hall after dimly lit hall of decrepit doors, ornate banisters and dust-impacted moldings, all scavenged from abandoned buildings and now priced in the hundreds and thousands.

The Pottery Barn shopper has to make do with faux age and wear. Not to worry though. "I've had a lot of clients who want that look but they don't want something that's really old because they don't like the idea that somebody's had their hands all over it," says Marks. "They prefer reproductions because that gives them the sense that the piece is not all covered with germs." The really germ-phobic shoppers can do it themselves with Pottery Barn's "woodwash and distressing kit" or "crackle glaze," which will "give a weathered look to new paint" and transform surfaces "into the beautiful crackles found on sun-baked furniture."

But watching all this beating and chaining and rubbing, I get to feeling a little melancholy. Something about the futility of it all. The "old," too, will pass. The signs appear first among the young. Urban Outfitters, a merchandise chain for 18- to 25-year-olds, has been offering up Rustic—a post-apocalypse, Mad Max Rustic—for years now. Divisional merchandise manager Gwen Duser almost sneers when she says, "We're still using that but it's not going to be as important as it has been.... A lot of stores are doing that now. K Mart is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

probably selling wood frames that have a distressed paint finish—but of course the way they do it, it doesn't work." These are the omens that fashion's cycles are already churning Rustic out and that this stuff—supposed to look so permanent, so rooted—will soon inevitably be discarded.

STEPHANIE GUTMANN is a New York writer.

MOSCOW POSTCARD

GOOSE STEPPES

By Masha Gessen

Late last year Russia's preeminent film director, Nikita Mikhalkov, an epic storyteller and a national icon, released a short film about his daughter called *Anna from 6 to 18*. Twelve years of family movies interspersed with rich archival footage came down to a single question: "Why didn't my daughter turn out the way I wanted?" The simple answer: "Because of the Soviet regime and decadent Western influence."

During the first week of February, just as the film was finishing its run at Moscow's prestigious Film Center, Mikhalkov turned up in a crowd of celebrities and quasi-celebrities on the stage of the opulent Column Hall of the House of the Union. He was there for the opening ceremonies of the World Russian Council, a three-day confab of right-wing forces brought together under the auspices of the Russian Orthodox Church. Mikhalkov is the latest in a line of cultural and political figures—artist Ilya Glazunov and Russian Social Democratic Party founder Oleg Rumiantsev among them—who seemed pro-Western enough just a couple of years ago but who have now thrown their support to the explicitly chauvinist far right. Their new allegiances will likely have some influence on voters in the parliamentary elections scheduled for December and the presidential elections slated for the following June—if the elections aren't canceled outright, as many in Moscow fear. With all established politicians facing disastrous popularity ratings, any number of right-wing outsiders, from General Aleksandr Lebed to Aleksandr Barkashov, head of the fascist Russian National Unity Party, could emerge as serious candidates. In the meantime, the appearance of figures such as Mikhalkov at events like this one is helping to legitimize the far right.

At the Column Hall, famous for its multitude of mirrors, the 1,400-strong, invitation-only gathering resembled a costume ball. Crowded into the front tiers were the Russian Orthodox clergy, white and black from head to toe. Behind them were several rows topped with the fur hats of the Cossacks, the paramilitary force that has traditionally propped up Russian nationalism and that was reconstituted by presidential decree three years ago. The rest of the sweltering hall sparkled with the stars on the epaulets of senior military officers and with the buttons—most of them some combination of the swastika and the imperial two-headed eagle—worn by members of various neo-Nazi groups.

Most of the time these groups make themselves visible in the streets—at Revolution Square, for example, under the Kremlin Wall. On this day, though, they came in from the cold to distribute fascist literature. (There are more than fifty openly fascist publications currently published in Russia.) Free handouts of *The Black Hundred*, a newspaper affectionately named for the pogrom-instigating organization of the early twentieth century, even created a small traffic jam.

The council's solemn business included four day-long sessions on topics such as the protection of Russian culture and ethnicity. One of the sessions, billed as the "National Security Working Group," drew together at least seven senior officers (including two generals), the faithful Cossacks and a dozen or so nuclear researchers; a senior staff member of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs presided. The emphasis on national security seemed a little out of place at a Church-sponsored gathering that repeatedly proclaimed its character was spiritual, not political. But then again, those reassurances served a pragmatic purpose. In this country, where politics as a pastime is more stigmatized now than ever, they lent the gathering moral standing. And they provided a cover for high-profile participants who are for one reason or another—as members of the clergy, for example—banned from political activity.

The council offered one of its more memorable exercises in revisionism when it passed a resolution calling for re-creating Great Russia in its "historical borders," though the group neglected to specify whether it was referring to the old Soviet borders or to those from an earlier period, when the empire contained Finland and Poland. Another resolution called for establishing the primacy of the Russian Orthodox religion, including a constitutional provision recognizing the Church's role in fostering patriotism and the required teaching of the law of God in public schools.

Finally, Church-sponsored gathering or not, there were matters of national security to resolve. Here, the council tried to straddle the line between pride and secrecy, boasting, with conspiratorial glee, of a new plan based on the old network of closed research towns. A dozen nuclear scientists announced that they had everything in place for a "project of protecting domestic technological advances on the basis of 230 square kilometers of closed polygon space." Before their presentations, some of the scientists had gathered in the coffee

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bar of the hotel where the working group met—a hotel so expensive that it normally attracts only moneyed foreigners. With my nose in an English-language newspaper, I passed for one and was able to eavesdrop on the group's excited backroom session. The project, it seems, boils down to the continuation of nuclear and other defense research and testing, using state grounds and private funding. In the current state of regulatory chaos, when the old defense industry is under pressure to find private investors and survive independently, such a project would not be difficult to orchestrate so long as the money is there.

The National Security Working Group ended its get-together with one Morozov, an ataman, or chief of a Cossack division. "I am not as well-educated as you all here," he told the generals and nuclear scientists. "But I have read the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and I can see that what is happening now is exactly what is written in there. And as long as the country is ruled by representatives of half a percent of the population, we are going to be in shit." The mood in the room, where about 100 people had been grimly scribbling notes, instantly lightened. Thundering applause segued into a discussion of the eternal question: Is there a difference between kikes and Jews? Conclusion: all Jews are kikes, but some non-Jews (democratic types, opponents of the war in Chechnya) are kikes also. "Hey, colleague," whispered a journalist who'd apparently been spying alongside me. "I think we should leave. It's lamppost time," referring to the time-honored call for hanging kikes on lampposts.

Russian school children have a joke: "The theory of relativity says that three hairs on your head is very little, but three hairs in your soup is a lot." Similarly, a murderous mob of 1,000 in a Moscow street is a gang. The same mob in Column Hall may be the future.

MASHA GESSEN writes on domestic politics for the Russian weekly magazine *New Times*.

The woman who loves Phil Gramm.

HILLARY'S NIGHTMARE

By Jennifer Bradley

Wendy Lee Gramm is a 50-year-old, right-wing economist. She's been married to the unlovely, unlovable Senator Phil Gramm for half her life. She's also Korean-American—and that, in a presidential campaign vulnerable to charges of divisive racial rhetoric, could turn out to be a secret asset for her husband. But that's not the only way the Wendy factor could be used as a subtle weapon against Gramm's likely opponent. With her independent career, she's not a Barbara Bush—but she is most definitely not a Hillary Rodham Clinton, either. In fact, she could be marketed as the anti-Hillary.

Unlike Mrs. Clinton, Gramm has made something of a fetish of separating her career from her husband's. "When she first got [to the Federal Trade Commission], the only thing we knew was that she was an economist, the wife of an increasingly prominent Democratic congressman," says Jack Calfee, who was one of Gramm's special assistants when she was director of the Bureau of Economics at the FTC during the early '80s. "There was some grumbling that she appeared to be the wife-of-someone. That did not last long. She worked very hard to establish herself, advancing the kinds of goals that the FTC works on." Even people who disagreed with those goals were quick to defend her abilities. "Since the day Wendy Gramm arrived at the Federal Trade Commission ... I have disagreed, usually strenuously, with virtually every policy recommendation she has authored," wrote Michael Pertschuk in a letter to *Fortune* magazine in 1983. But when *Fortune* hinted at an uxorial advantage for Mrs. Gramm, Pertschuk lectured that she "has demonstrated a quiet competence and an ability to deal generously with the vast divisions of opinion that mark this agency's deliberations. In short, there is no reason to believe that Director Gramm was chosen for any other reason than her professional qualifications." Pertschuk, chairman of the FTC during the Carter administration, was in the minority on Reagan's FTC, thanks to his vigorously pro-consumer and pro-regulation views. Gramm was and is ardently free-market.

When Gramm's boss left the FTC and became director of the Office of Management and Budget, she followed him. At the time, she says, Phil advised against it. "His response was, 'Don't go to OMB. I know that place. It's a terrible place.' So much for me listening to Phil. I do value his opinion on things. It's just that sometimes I do what I want." She was the administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, another post where she promoted President Reagan's policy of maximum feasible deregulation. At OMB there was less kvetching about whom Gramm was married to and more about what she was doing. Consumer advocates and some congressional Democrats complained that Gramm and her team of cost-benefit crazed economists subverted the intent of laws by watering down or overruling regulations. So incensed were House Democrats that they voted to eliminate the funding for her office. Gramm made a deal with two important senators, Democrat Carl Levin of Michigan and Republican David Durenberger of Minnesota, promising to make her office's decision-making process more public, and resecured her position.

In late 1987 Reagan nominated Gramm to chair the Commodity Futures Trading Commission. It was perhaps an odd choice (according to Gramm, her husband urged her against taking this position, too), in that Gramm had little if any experience in commodities. But she was a quick study. Good thing, too. A year after her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

appointment, she was fighting a jurisdictional battle with the Securities and Exchange Commission. There was talk of transferring control over stock index futures from the CFTC to the SEC, or even subsuming the CFTC into the SEC. Going into the squabble, Gramm was weak because of accusations of lapses in CFTC enforcement of trading rules and of purposefully misleading Congress. It didn't help that Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan and Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady were siding with the SEC, trying to take away some of her regulatory turf. The battle dragged on long enough that Gramm's renomination came up while she was fighting an administration proposal. After a number of contentious hearings, and at least one accusation that her husband had strong-armed senators to vote to protect her agency, the CFTC remained intact. She didn't save her agency single-handedly—she had the support of the powerful Chicago commodities exchanges and a number of agricultural interests—but she did impress people with her toughness and intellect.

Courtesy Phil Gramm for President campaign

COMPUTER ILLUSTRATION OF WENDY LEE GRAMM BY THE NEW REPUBLIC

However separate the two careers remained (and they are certainly less entwined than those of Bill and Hillary Clinton), Gramm's marital connections could not have been lost on those who appointed, or challenged, her. But this professional history helps Wendy Gramm on both sides of the First Lady debate. Although she insists that she and her husband don't talk much about work—"I mean, we don't sit around the dinner table talking about the peso, the dollar or whatever"—it's a rare political wife who doesn't give her husband some advice. And who better to tell Phil Gramm how to grapple with bureaucratic intransigence than someone who has done it herself?

The other subtle advantage that Gramm gives her husband is that an independent, intelligent wife makes Phil Gramm look a little more appealing to the independent women voters the Republicans need. She helps him on the character issue by showing he's not afraid of smart, strong women—just the type of women that might like his policies but be put off by his redneck demeanor.

In an interview, Wendy Gramm is surprisingly casual—tipping her chair back and finger-combing her short dark hair—though she is dressed in a conservative Washington suit. What kind of image would she project as a First Lady? She won't say what she'd do with the position. ("If that happens," she laughs, "you can ask me then.") But it's clear she thinks of it, naïvely perhaps, as a role to play occasionally, not a career in itself. "You just work it into your schedule, nicely," she says. For an American public that wants to like strong women—sort of—she's perfect.

The fact that she's the granddaughter of Korean immigrants is the other reason Wendy Gramm is an asset to her husband's campaign. Not that she claims to have given it much thought. She shrugs when asked about the symbolism of her multicultural marriage, saying, "I come from Hawaii, it's a grand melting pot in a way, so I don't even think about it." But it's worth pondering. Were Phil Gramm married to a black or Hispanic woman, even an impeccably conservative one, he'd probably risk some white votes. But white Americans think of Asians and Asian Americans as the "model minority." Wendy Gramm's ethnicity won't salve the hurt feelings of blacks who support affirmative action or Hispanics who oppose Proposition 187 and similar measures, but neither is it likely to alienate too many white conservatives, and it may win over some moderate voters. His wife's heritage brings Phil Gramm a touching story, told in his announcement speech and sure to be heard hundreds of times, of her grandparents cutting sugarcane in Hawaii, her father becoming manager of a sugar company and Wendy Gramm regulating sugar futures at the CFTC. It also gives him two sons who are photogenic, hand-shaking embodiments of melting-pot America. The Gramms are what, for all the hysteria about Balkanization and separatist excesses, American families are beginning to look like.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Yet Gramm, who was in favor of Proposition 187, has little to say of any depth about immigration, or about other social issues for that matter. When asked to account for her family's success, and the different experience of other minority groups in America, she declares, "This is a country really of individuals." What do women and other disadvantaged groups need in order to advance? Not set-asides, not family-leave protections, not anything but a go-going economy. She won't even condemn Patrick Buchanan's nastiness, saying instead, "The Republican Party is one where, almost by definition, everybody's real independent.... My view is that, shoot, people getting out and saying what they want to say, people might not agree with it, but I think it's fine." She wriggles around a question on gay rights by talking about a color-blind society without special privilege or bias. Asked if government has any role to play in reforming values, she offers an answer that sounds almost libertarian, in a treacly sort of way: "It would be very difficult for government to do so. Nobody would agree. And I don't think that government can substitute for a father or mother or somebody to hug you."

This touchy-feely dynamic works a little differently in Wendy Gramm's case than in Phil Gramm's. He has to show voters that *he* can be nice and be conservative. She gets to reassure the electorate that *they* can be nice and be conservative.

Independent woman though she may be, Gramm still has some of the un-Hillary-like instincts of an old-school political wife. She likes to remind people that it's her husband who's campaigning, not she, and that when she speaks, she's articulating her own positions, not his. So it's natural enough to ask: Where do they differ? Long pause. "Probably about how much he yells at Aggie football games," she sighs. "Sometimes he's loud. Real loud. I can't think of things. There are things that we disagree about, but they're not real substantial. Like whether or not we should eat at Burger King." •

The good news in research.

AIDS HOPE

By Jerome Groopman

For the past few years, there's been an atmosphere of despair in the journalism of AIDS, a party line of no new leads in research, of frustrated physicians and withering patients. Perhaps it's due to the inherent fickleness of the press, which once touted "cures" and now touts "dead ends"; or of the government, which first promised instant vaccines and then dragged its feet on research. But the truth is, the scientific evidence suggests there is now real hope for people with the human immune deficiency virus (HIV) and AIDS. In the foreseeable future, the ubiquitous phrase "fatal disease" may have to be retired.

There will, of course, be millions of people who will die from HIV because their immune systems have been so ravaged and their vital organs so devastated by infections and cancers that no repair can be achieved. Others, mostly in Africa, Asia and the Indian subcontinent, will succumb because there is no economic and logistical way to deliver effective treatments to their areas. But the future for many in the West holds great promise. While there are no guarantees that we will win, the momentum is powerful, the enemy known, the technology focused, the strategy refined and the progress real.

The story of how this came about is largely one of painstaking, rational research. Researchers working to fight AIDS have one basic advantage: knowledge of its root cause. The human immune deficiency virus is the basic cause of the immune deterioration that makes someone susceptible to lethal infections. The virus has been characterized in exquisite molecular detail. We know a great deal about its structure and function.

Although therapies for other diseases have in the past arisen from serendipity and empiricism, in the case of HIV, we have designed its treatment in a rational way. Researchers have used new techniques in molecular biology, crystallography, chemistry and high-performance computing to speed the creation of drugs that were once discovered by the painfully slow process of trial and error, or not discovered at all. Important new anti-viral drugs are now changing the downhill trajectory of the immune function that follows infection, sustaining people's immune systems for longer periods of time.

Even for those whose systems have already been wrecked, we now have sophisticated combinations of antibiotics that reduce the incidence and severity of pneumonia, meningitis and tuberculosis-like infections. By slowing down the reproduction of the virus, and by shoring up defenses against the sea of microbes that assault infected people, HIV is slowly being converted from a fatal infection to a chronic condition.

We also now know that the virus doesn't lie dormant for months to years. It reproduces itself from the beginning, particularly in lymph nodes, and the body's immune system immediately gears up to replace the dying T cells—cells in the blood that protect the body against certain parasites and bacteria. Ultimately, the virus outstrips the rate at which the body can generate these immune defense T cells.

If we can slow the rate of the virus's replication, however, the body's own response could tip this balance in its favor and allow for prolonged stability of immune function. That's what AZT and a family of new drugs on the verge of distribution are beginning to achieve.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

How do these drugs work? We first need to understand how HIV destroys the immune system. Initially, the outside envelope of HIV attaches to the surface of a T cell. Interestingly, HIV leaves most of the immune system alone. That's why people with AIDS can often deal with many normal immune challenges, such as colds or cuts, perfectly easily.

Once HIV has docked into a T cell, it acts like an unwanted guest, rapidly shedding its exterior coat in order to take over its new home, the cell. Its enzymes go to work, copying the virus's RNA into a DNA form. This process uses an enzyme called reverse transcriptase, unique to HIV. Once the virus's DNA is synthesized, another enzyme, called an integrase, integrates the HIV DNA into the normal DNA of the T cell. The integrated viral DNA can then produce new viral RNA and form viral proteins: the fledgling elements of new virus. These proteins are cut into the right shape by a viral "scissor" called a protease, because it clips proteins. Once that is done, the new viral particles can leave the cell and go infect others.

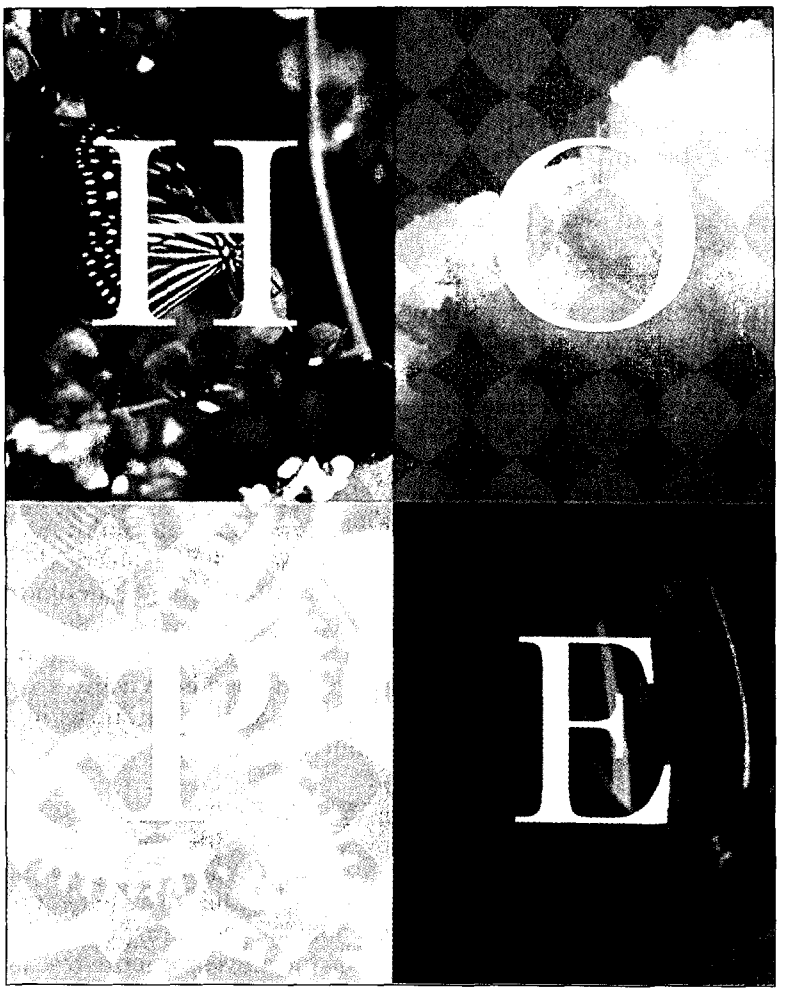


ILLUSTRATION BY ERIC BAKER FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Think of *Aliens*. When the virus enters a T cell, it functions as a parasite: it takes over the machinery of the normal cell, and then *this cell* makes new viral genes and proteins that then become new particles of the virus. People's own immune systems become the means for the virus to reproduce itself. After turning the T cell into a factory for HIV, the virus ultimately kills the parasitized cell, having spawned new progeny and so fulfilled its mission.

The good news of this gruesome journey is that there are several critical points where we can intervene to block the process: the reverse transcriptase step; the protease step; or even the step where the virus's genes are integrated into the T cell's. The first set of drugs shown to inhibit HIV worked against the reverse transcriptase step. That's what the much-maligned AZT was designed to do. Despite a great deal of negative publicity, it works.

AZT got a bad rap initially because it was toxic in high doses. But the benefits of treatment were clearly proven in a placebo-controlled trial nearly eight years ago. AZT both reduced the number of new infections and improved the survival of patients who had AIDS. The pros and cons of AZT, with regard to dose, schedule, toxicity, duration of benefit and appropriate patient group for administration are still hotly debated. In the doses currently given by most practitioners, which are one-quarter to one-third those used in the original placebo-controlled study, AZT is well-tolerated.

If taken alone, AZT helps most people by reducing virus production for about nine to twelve months. After that time, HIV begins to escape from the inhibition of AZT by mutating. These specific mutations have been identified and a great deal is known about how the virus wriggles free from the treatment. A virus that has mutated to become resistant to AZT is still sensitive to other members of the reverse transcriptase inhibitor family like ddI, ddC, and the latest and most powerful drug of this kind, 3TC.

Through this process of mutation, the virus gets around the chemical roadblocks thrown in its path. Despite the agility of the virus in jumping over these obstacles, there's accumulating evidence that by setting up a series of barricades, the virus is more likely to be trapped than to proceed, and the amount of virus production is greatly diminished. This should translate into less destruction of T cells and sustained immune function, as the body responds to the loss of T cells by ramping up its production of these vital immune defenders.

The approach of combining drugs to overcome resistance and to lower doses of each drug used in the combination (and thus attendant toxicity) has worked with a number of previously incurable diseases. Combinations of chemotherapeutic agents, radiation therapy and corticosteroids were used to treat and ultimately cure children with acute leukemia, adults with Hodgkin's disease and men with testicular cancers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Although these triumphs exist against a background of many incurable cancers, they stand as lifesaving advances made by laboratory and clinical scientists over the past three decades. And although two years ago we prematurely declared victory over HIV using a combination of three reverse transcriptase inhibitors, clinical studies of certain combinations of these drugs, such as AZT and 3TC, indicate a profound decrease in the level of circulating HIV (about one-hundredfold) that is sustained for more than a year. This degree of reduction in free viral particles in the bloodstream is not seen with either AZT or 3TC alone, and not for this time period. This is real progress. There's no essential reason why the paths that led to breakthroughs in some cancers should not be equally successful with HIV.

Even as we see these promising results with reverse transcriptase inhibitors, clinical assessment of the protease inhibitors has begun. The data are striking: preliminary reports reveal dramatic increases in helper T-cell numbers and decreases in the amount of circulating free virus. Side effects have been minimal.

We have been slow in getting these drugs into patients partly because they're hard to produce. Recently, several biotechnology companies with expertise in rational drug design have succeeded in ironing out some of the production problems. All the evidence suggests that these rationally designed protease inhibitors are the most significant advances yet in HIV therapy. Sober, cautious researchers, who have suffered past disappointments in AIDS drug development and are not given to hype, express optimism that combinations of AZT, 3TC and protease inhibitors will dramatically benefit patients. The goal is not yet a cure, but a way to extend life by the years needed to find a cure: bridges that will eventually make it to dry land.

The dry land may come from the insight that HIV-infection is essentially a genetic disease. You can think of the fundamental problem as having acquired a set of viral genes integrated into your own DNA. So why not take a gene therapy approach to block the viral genes directly? Gene therapy requires several bits of parallel technology to succeed: the ability to isolate the blood cells that give rise to the immune system; the capacity to synthesize artificial genes that can interfere with the viral genes; and a way to introduce the new genes into the T cells to block the HIV genes. In the most positive scenario, making T cells genetically resistant to HIV could sustain a high enough level of HIV-resistant T cells to stave off immune collapse indefinitely. Indeed, if enough cells of the immune system were genetically altered, the virus might lack enough targets to perpetuate itself and ultimately burn out.

This scenario is not fantasy. Advances in molecular technology have yielded the capacity to create artificial blocking genes targeted to HIV gene segments. Recently, methods have been developed to isolate the marrow stem cells that give rise to our entire blood-forming system, including our immune system. Similarly, researchers have recently discovered ways to transfer gene-blockers efficiently into stem cells. The pace of research in this area is so rapid that serious application of gene therapy for HIV disease is within reach.

We've also begun to find out a great deal from examining long-term survivors of HIV infection. One insight is that the helper T cells are not the only T-cell population important in sustaining immune function in the face of HIV. Long-term survivors have a robust *killer* T-cell response. These T cells, known as T-8s, are not susceptible to HIV infection but act to attack and destroy virally infected cells. Researchers have begun to be able to genetically alter killer T cells to boost their killing efficiency and program them to seek and destroy HIV-infected targets with unrelenting zeal. A pilot study of this approach initiated recently at the National Institutes of Health offers a first step to genetically altering and thereby boosting the immune response against the virus.

As we pursue these three lines of attack on the virus, we're still faced with many patients whose immune defenses are terribly impaired. As a result, they're highly susceptible to opportunistic infections and cancers. This usually occurs when someone's helper T-cell level is less than 200. (The average level in a healthy person is between 600 and 1,200.) Happily, though, an armamentarium of prophylactic antibiotics protecting these patients from mycobacteria, protozoa, viral and fungal opportunistic pathogens has markedly reduced the incidence and severity of previously fatal pneumonia, encephalitis, meningitis and colitis. There are still microbes for which we lack good preventive agents. But this once unaddressed need is an active area of research, and likely to yield as well to advances in medicinal chemistry and microbiology.

With so many young people dead and sick, and with so many false dawns, it's understandable that many people have grown almost numb to the idea that there can ever be good news about AIDS. Some are even fearful of it, in case it removes the incentives for more research spending, or if it might encourage unsafe sex. But progress in research should encourage more, not less, research spending. When there's light at the end of the tunnel, why not get there even sooner? And besides, there is good news: a story of slow, incremental progress that is keeping people alive longer and in better shape. It's important to get this news out, not simply for all those battling this disease every day, but also for all those whose unwarranted pessimism has led them not to get tested. One day—and it is within years rather than decades or centuries—we will change the current outcome of HIV infection. We will be able to tell the infected person honestly that he or she will live, and live well, and live long.

JEROME GROOPMAN is the director of the Robert Mapplethorpe Laboratory for AIDS research.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CLASS, NOT RACE

By Richard Kahlenberg

In an act that reflected panic as much as cool reflection, Bill Clinton said recently that he is reviewing all federal affirmative action programs to see "whether there is some other way we can reach [our] objective without giving a preference by race or gender." As the country's mood swings violently against affirmative action, and as Republicans gear up to use the issue to bludgeon the Democratic coalition yet again in 1996, the whole project of legislating racial equality seems suddenly in doubt. The Democrats, terrified of the issue, are now hoping it will just go away. It won't. But at every political impasse, there is a political opportunity. Bill Clinton now has a chance, as no other Democrat has had since 1968, to turn a glaring liability for his party into an advantage—without betraying basic Democratic principles.

There is, as Clinton said, a way "we can work this out." But it isn't the "*Bakke* straddle," which says yes to affirmative action (race as a factor) but no to quotas. It isn't William Julius Wilson's call to "emphasize" race-neutral social programs, while downplaying affirmative action. The days of downplaying are gone; we can count on the Republicans for that. The way out—an idea Clinton hinted at—is to introduce the principle of race neutrality and the goal of aiding the disadvantaged into affirmative action preference programs themselves: to base preferences, in education, entry-level employment and public contracting, on class, not race.

Were Clinton to propose this move, the media would charge him with lurching to the right. Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign would surely soon follow. But despite its association with conservatives such as Clarence Thomas, Antonin Scalia and Dinesh D'Souza, the idea of class-based affirmative action should in fact appeal to the left as well. After all, its message of addressing class unfairness and its political potential for building cross-racial coalitions are traditional liberal staples.

For many years, the left argued not only that class was important, but also that it was more important than race. This argument was practical, ideological and politic. An emphasis on class inequality meant Robert Kennedy riding in a motorcade through cheering white and black sections of racially torn Gary, Indiana, in 1968, with black Mayor Richard Hatcher on one side, and white working-class boxing hero Tony Zale on the other.

Ideologically, it was clear that with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, class replaced caste as the central impediment to equal opportunity. Martin Luther King Jr. moved from the Montgomery Boycott to the Poor People's Campaign, which he described as "his last, greatest dream," and "something bigger than just a civil rights movement for Negroes." RFK told David Halberstam that "it was pointless to talk about the real problem in America being black and white, it was really rich and poor, which was a much more complex subject."

Finally, the left emphasized class because to confuse class and race was seen not only as wrong but as dangerous. This notion was at the heart of the protest over Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1965 report, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, in which Moynihan depicted the rising rates of illegitimacy among poor blacks. While Moynihan's critics were wrong to silence discussion of illegitimacy among blacks, they rightly noted that the title of the report, which implicated all blacks, was misleading, and that fairly high rates of illegitimacy also were present among poor whites—a point which Moynihan readily endorses today. (In the wake of the second set of L.A. riots in 1992, Moynihan rose on the Senate floor to reaffirm that family structure "is not an issue of race but of class.... It is class behavior.")

The irony is that affirmative action based on race violates these three liberal insights. It provides the ultimate wedge to destroy Robert Kennedy's coalition. It says that despite civil rights protections, the wealthiest African American is more deserving of preference than the poorest white. It relentlessly focuses all attention on race.

In contrast, Lyndon Johnson's June 1965 address to Howard University, in which the concept of affirmative action was first unveiled, did not ignore class. In a speech drafted by Moynihan, Johnson spoke of the

continued on page 24

RICHARD KAHLENBERG is writing a book on class-based affirmative action for Basic Books.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Surveillance

* Precision

Strike

The ability to strike mobile targets from stand-off range with utmost precision. Example: the BAT "brilliant" antiarmor submunition. When integrated with real-time surveillance and battle management, these capabilities and the core technologies they represent allow new levels of coordination in joint military operations. Northrop Grumman has expertise in each of these areas. And even more important: the knowledge and skills to integrate them. Northrop Grumman. Systems integration, military aircraft, defense electronics, precision weapons, commercial and military aerostructures. The right technologies. Right now.

NORTHROP GRUMMAN

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bifurcation of the black community, and, in his celebrated metaphor, said we needed to aid those "hobbled" in life's race by past discrimination. This suggested special help for disadvantaged blacks, not all blacks; for the young Clarence Thomas, but not for Clarence Thomas's son. Johnson balked at implementing the thematic language of his speech. His Executive Order 11246, calling for "affirmative action" among federal contractors, initially meant greater outreach and required hiring without respect to race. In fact, LBJ rescinded his Labor Department's proposal to provide for racial quotas in the construction industry in Philadelphia. It fell to Richard Nixon to implement the "Philadelphia Plan," in what Nixon's aides say was a conscious effort to drive a wedge between blacks and labor. (Once he placed racial preferences on the table, Nixon adroitly extricated himself, and by 1972 was campaigning against racial quotas.)

The ironies were compounded by the Supreme Court. In the 1974 case *DeFunis* v. *Odegaard*, in which a system of racial preferences in law school admissions was at issue, it was the Court's liberal giant, William O. Douglas, who argued that racial preferences were unconstitutional, and suggested instead that preferences be based on disadvantage. Four years later, in the *Bakke* case, the great proponent of affirmative action as a means to achieve "diversity" was Nixon appointee Lewis F. Powell Jr. Somewhere along the line, the right wing embraced Douglas and Critical Race Theory embraced Powell.

Today, the left pushes racial preferences, even for the most advantaged minorities, in order to promote diversity and provide role models for disadvantaged blacks—an argument which, if it came from Ronald Reagan, the left would rightly dismiss as trickle-down social theory. Today, when William Julius Wilson argues the opposite of the Moynihan report—that the problems facing the black community are rooted more in class than race—it is Wilson who is excoriated by civil rights groups. The left can barely utter the word "class," instead resorting to euphemisms such as "income groups," "wage earners" and "people who play by the rules."

For all of this, the left has paid a tremendous price. On a political level, with a few notable exceptions, the history of the past twenty-five years is a history of white, working-class Robert Kennedy Democrats turning first into Wallace Democrats, then into Nixon and Reagan Democrats and ultimately into today's Angry White Males. Time and again, the white working class votes its race rather than its class, and Republicans win. The failure of the left to embrace class also helps turn poor blacks, for whom racial preferences are, in Stephen Carter's words, "stunningly irrelevant," toward Louis Farrakhan.

On the merits, the left has committed itself to a goal—equality of group results—which seems highly radical, when it is in fact rather unambitious. To the extent that affirmative action, at its ultimate moment of success, merely creates a self-perpetuating black elite along with a white one, its goal is modest—certainly more conservative than real equality of opportunity, which gives blacks and whites and other Americans of all economic strata a fair chance at success.

The priority given to race over class has inevitably exacerbated white racism. Today, both liberals and conservatives conflate race and class because it serves both of their purposes to do so. Every year, when SAT scores are released, the breakdown by race shows enormous gaps between blacks on the one hand and whites and Asians on the other. The NAACP cites these figures as evidence that we need to do more. Charles Murray cites the same statistics as evidence of intractable racial differences. We rarely see a breakdown of scores by class, which would show enormous gaps between rich and poor, gaps that would help explain the differences in scores by race.

On the legal front, it once made some strategic sense to emphasize race over class. But when states moved to the remedial phrase—and began trying to address past discrimination—the racial focus became a liability. The strict scrutiny that struck down Jim Crow is now used, to varying degrees, to curtail racial preferences. Class, on the other hand, is not one of the suspect categories under the Fourteenth Amendment, which leaves class-based remedies much less assailable.

If class-based affirmative action is a theory that liberals should take seriously, how would it work in practice? In this magazine, Michael Kinsley has asked, "Does Clarence Thomas, the sharecropper's kid, get more or fewer preference points than the unemployed miner's son from Appalachia?" Most conservative proponents of class-based affirmative action have failed to explain their idea with any degree of specificity. Either they're insincere—offering the alternative only for tactical reasons—or they're stumped.

The former is more likely. While the questions of implementation are serious and difficult, they are not impossible to answer. At the university level, admissions committees deal every day with precisely the type of apples-and-oranges question that Kinsley poses. Should a law school admit an applicant with a 3.2 GPA from Yale or a 3.3 from Georgetown? How do you compare those two if one applicant worked for the Peace Corps but the other had slightly higher LSATs?

In fact, a number of universities already give preferences for disadvantaged students in addition to racial minorities. Since 1989 Berkeley has granted special consideration to applicants "from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds ... regardless of race or ethnicity." Temple University Law School has, since the 1970s, given preference to "applicants who have overcome exceptional and continuous economic deprivation." And at Hastings College of Law, 20 percent of the class is set aside for disadvantaged students through the Legal Equal Opportunity Program. Even the U.C.-Davis medical program challenged by Allan Bakke was limited to "disadvantaged" minorities, a sys-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tem which Davis apparently did not find impossible to administer.

Similar class-based preference programs could be provided by public employers and federal contractors for high school graduates not pursuing college, on the theory that at that age their class-based handicaps hide their true potential and are not at all of their own making. In public contracting, government agencies could follow the model of New York City's old class-based program, which provided preferences based not on the ethnicity or gender of the contractor, but to small firms located in New York City which did part of their business in depressed areas or employed economically disadvantaged workers.

The definition of class or disadvantage may vary according to context, but if, for example, the government chose to require class-based affirmative action from universities receiving federal funds, it is possible to devise an enforceable set of objective standards for deprivation. If the aim of class-based affirmative action is to provide a system of genuine equality of opportunity, a leg up to promising students who have done well despite the odds, we have a wealth of sociological data to devise an obstacles test. While some might balk at the very idea of reducing disadvantage to a number, we currently reduce intellectual promise to numbers—SATs and GPAs—and adding a number for disadvantage into the calculus just makes deciding who gets ahead and who does not a little fairer.

There are three basic ways to proceed: with a simple, moderate or complex definition. The simple method is to ask college applicants their family's income and measure disadvantage by that factor alone, on the theory that income is a good proxy for a whole host of economic disadvantages (such as bad schools or a difficult learning environment). This oversimplified approach is essentially the tack we've taken with respect to compensatory race-based affirmative action. For example, most affirmative action programs ask applicants to check a racial box and sweep all the ambiguities under the rug. Even though African Americans have, as Justice Thurgood Marshall said in *Bakke*, suffered a history "different in kind, not just degree, from that of other ethnic groups," universities don't calibrate preferences based on comparative group disadvantage (and, in the Davis system challenged by Bakke, two-thirds of the preferences went to Mexican-Americans and Asians, not blacks). We also ignore the question of when an individual's family immigrated in order to determine whether the family was even theoretically subject to the official discrimination in this country on which preferences are predicated.

"Diversity" was supposed to solve all this by saying we don't care about compensation, only viewpoint. But, again, if universities are genuinely seeking diversity of viewpoints, they should inquire whether a minority applicant really does have the "minority viewpoint" being sought. Derrick Bell's famous statement—"the ends of diversity are not served by people who look black and think white"—is at once repellent and a relevant critique of the assumption that all minority members think alike. In theory, we need some assurance from the applicant that he or she will in fact interact with students of different backgrounds, lest the cosmetic diversity of the freshman yearbook be lost to the reality of ethnic theme houses.

The second way to proceed, the moderately complicated calculus of class, would look at what sociologists believe to be the Big Three determinants of life chances: parental income, education and occupation. Parents' education, which is highly correlated with a child's academic achievement, can be measured in number of years. And while ranking occupations might seem hopelessly complex, various attempts to do so objectively have yielded remarkably consistent results—from the Barr Scale of the early 1920s to Alba Edwards' Census rankings of the 1940s to the Duncan Scores of the 1960s.

The third alternative, the complex calculus of disadvantage, would count all the factors mentioned, but might also look at net worth, the quality of secondary education, neighborhood influences and family structure. An applicant's family wealth is readily available from financial aid forms, and provides a long-term view of relative disadvantage, to supplement the "snapshot" picture that income provides. We also know that schooling opportunities are crucial to a student's life chances, even controlling for home environment. Some data suggest that a disadvantaged student at a middle-class school does better on average than a middle-class student at a school with high concentrations of poverty. Objective figures are available to measure secondary school quality—from per student expenditure, to the percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunches, to a school's median score on standardized achievement tests. Neighborhood influences, measured by the concentration of poverty within Census tracts or zip codes, could also be factored in, since numerous studies have found that living in a low-income community can adversely affect an individual's life chances above and beyond family income. Finally, everyone from Dan Quayle to Donna Shalala agrees that children growing up in single-parent homes have a tougher time. This factor could be taken into account as well.

The point is not that this list is the perfect one, but that it *is* possible to devise a series of fairly objective and verifiable factors that measure the degree to which a teenager's true potential has been hidden. (As it happens, the complex definition is the one that disproportionately benefits African Americans. Even among similar income groups, blacks are more likely than whites to live in concentrated poverty, go to bad schools and live in single-parent homes.) It's just not true that a system of class preferences is inherently harder to administer than a system based on race. Race only seems simpler because we have ignored the ambiguities. And racial preferences

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are just as easy to ridicule. To paraphrase Kinsley, does a new Indian immigrant get fewer or more points than a third-generation Latino whose mother is Anglo?

Who should benefit? Mickey Kaus, in "Class Is In," (TRB, March 27) argued that class preferences should be reserved for the underclass. But the injuries of class extend beyond the poorest. The offspring of the working poor and the working class lack advantages, too, and indeed SAT scores correlate lockstep with income at every increment. Unless you believe in genetic inferiority, these statistics suggest unfairness is not confined to the underclass. As a practical matter, a teenager who emerges from the underclass has little chance of surviving at an elite college. At Berkeley, administrators found that using a definition of disadvantaged, under which neither parent attended a four-year college and the family could not afford to pay $1,000 in education expenses, failed to bring in enough students who were likely to pass.

ILLUSTRATION BY TOM PRESTON FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Still, there are several serious objections to class-based preferences that must be addressed.

1. *We're not ready to be color-blind because racial discrimination continues to afflict our society.* Ron Brown says affirmative action "continues to be needed not to redress grievances of the past, but the current discrimination that continues to exist." This is a relatively new theory, which conveniently elides the fact that preferences were supposed to be temporary. It also stands logic on its head. While racial discrimination undoubtedly still exists, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was meant to address prospective discrimination. Affirmative action—discrimination in itself—makes sense only to the extent that there is a current-day legacy of *past* discrimination which new prospective laws cannot reach back and remedy.

In the contexts of education and employment, the Civil Rights Act already contains powerful tools to address intentional and unintentional discrimination. The Civil Rights Act of 1991 reaffirmed the need to address unintentional discrimination—by requiring employers to justify employment practices that are statistically more likely to hurt minorities—but it did so without crossing the line to required preferences. This principle also applies to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, so that if, for example, it can be shown that the SAT produces an unjustified disparate impact, a university can be barred from using it. In addition, "soft" forms of affirmative action, which require employers and universities to broaden the net and interview people from all races are good ways of ensuring positions are not filled by word of mouth, through wealthy white networks.

We have weaker tools to deal with discrimination in other areas of life—say, taxi drivers who refuse to pick up black businessmen—but how does a preference in education or employment remedy that wrong? By contrast, there is nothing illegal about bad schools, bad housing and grossly stunted opportunities for the poor. A class preference is perfectly appropriate.

2. *Class preferences will be just as stigmatizing as racial preferences.* Kinsley argues that "any debilitating self-doubt that exists because of affirmative action is not going to be mitigated by being told you got into Harvard because of your 'socioeconomic disadvantage' rather than your race."

But class preferences are different from racial preferences in at least two important respects. First, stigma—in one's own eyes and the eyes of others—is bound up with the question of whether an admissions criterion is accepted as legitimate. Students with good grades aren't seen as getting in "just because they're smart." And there appears to be a societal consensus—from Douglas to Scalia—that kids from poor backgrounds deserve a leg up. Such a consensus has never existed for class-blind racial preferences.

Second, there is no myth of inferiority in this country about the abilities of poor people comparable to that about African Americans. Now, if racial preferences are purely a matter of compensatory justice, then the question of whether preferences exacerbate white racism is not relevant. But today racial preferences are often justified by social utility (bringing different racial groups together helps dispel stereotypes) in which case the social consequences are highly relevant. The general argument made by proponents of racial preferences—that policies need to be grounded in social reality, not ahistorical theory—cuts in favor of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the class category. Why? Precisely because there is no stubborn historical myth for it to reinforce.

Kaus makes a related argument when he says that class preferences "will still reward those who play the victim." But if objective criteria are used to define the disadvantaged, there is no way to "play" the victim. Poor and working-class teenagers are the victims of class inequality not of their own making. Preferences, unlike, say, a welfare check, tell poor teenagers not that they are helpless victims, but that we think their long-run potential is great, and we're going to give them a chance—if they work their tails off—to prove themselves.

3. *Class preferences continue to treat people as members of groups as opposed to individuals.* Yes. But so do university admissions policies that summarily reject students below a certain SAT level. It's hard to know what treating people as individuals means. (Perhaps if university admissions committees interviewed the teachers of each applicant back to kindergarten to get a better picture of their academic potential, we'd be treating them more as individuals.) The question is not whether we treat people as members of groups—that's inevitable—but whether the group is a relevant one. And in measuring disadvantage (and hidden potential) class is surely a much better proxy than race.

4. *Class-based affirmative action will not yield a diverse student body in elite colleges.* Actually, there is reason to believe that class preferences will disproportionately benefit people of color in most contexts—since minorities are disproportionately poor. In the university context, however, class-based preferences were rejected during the 1970s in part because of fear that they would produce inadequate numbers of minority students. The problem is that when you control for income, African American students do worse than white and Asian students on the SAT—due in part to differences in culture and linguistic patterns, and in part to the way income alone as a measurement hides other class-based differences among ethnic groups.

The concern is a serious and complicated one. Briefly, there are four responses. First, even Murray and Richard Herrnstein agree that the residual racial gap in scores has declined significantly in the past two decades, so the concern, though real, is not as great as it once was. Second, if we use the sophisticated definition of class discussed earlier—which reflects the relative disadvantage of blacks vis-à-vis whites of the same income level—the racial gap should close further. Third, we can improve racial diversity by getting rid of unjustified preferences—for alumni kids or students from underrepresented geographic regions—which disproportionately hurt people of color. Finally, if the goal is to provide genuine equal opportunity, not equality of group result, and if we are satisfied that a meritocratic system which corrects for class inequality is the best possible approximation of that equality, then we have achieved our goal.

5. *Class-based affirmative action will cause as much resentment among those left out as race-based affirmative action.* Kinsley argues that the rejected applicant in the infamous Jesse Helms commercial from 1990 would feel just as angry for losing out on a class-based as a race-based preference, since both involve "making up for past injustice." The difference, of course, is that class preferences go to the actual victims of class injury, mooting the whole question of intergenerational justice. In the racial context, this was called "victim specificity." Even the Reagan administration was in favor of compensating actual victims of racial discrimination.

The larger point implicit in Kinsley's question is a more serious one: that any preference system, whether race- or class-based, is "still a form of zero-sum social engineering." Why should liberals push for class preferences at all? Why not just provide more funding for education, safer schools, better nutrition? The answer is that liberals should do these things; but we cannot hold our breath for it to happen. In 1993, when all the planets were aligned—a populist Democratic president, Democratic control of both Houses of Congress—they produced what *The New York Times* called "A BUDGET WORTHY OF MR. BUSH." Cheaper alternatives, such as preferences, must supplement more expensive strategies of social spending. Besides, to the extent that class preferences help change the focus of public discourse from race to class, they help reforge the coalition needed to sustain the social programs liberals want.

Class preferences could restore the successful formula on which the early civil rights movement rested: morally unassailable underpinnings and a relatively inexpensive agenda. It's crucial to remember that Martin Luther King Jr. called for special consideration based on class, not race. After laying out a forceful argument for the special debt owed to blacks, King rejected the call for a Negro Bill of Rights in favor of a Bill of Rights for the Disadvantaged. It was King's insight that there were nonracial ways to remedy racial wrongs, and that the injuries of class deserve attention along with the injuries of race.

None of this is to argue that King would have opposed affirmative action if the alternative were to do nothing. For Jesse Helms to invoke King's color-blind rhetoric now that it is in the interests of white people to do so is the worst kind of hypocrisy. Some form of compensation is necessary, and I think affirmative action, though deeply flawed, is better than nothing.

But the opportunity to save affirmative action of any kind may soon pass. If the Supreme Court continues to narrow the instances in which racial preferences are justified, if California voters put an end to affirmative action in their state and if Congress begins to roll back racial preferences in legislation which President Clinton finds hard to veto—or President Phil Gramm signs with gusto—conservatives will have less and less reason to bargain. Now is the time to call their bluff. •

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Peculiarities

The last castrato, Alessandro Moreschi, died in 1922 at the age of 64. On his records (which I've never heard) he is called "soprano of the Sistine Chapel." The first castrato appeared in that chapel's choir in 1562. The practice flourished wildly in the eighteenth century when the voices of castrati brought about the composition of incredibly florid music, both for church and secular use, especially opera. Some castrati could, by report, sing 250 notes with one breath or could hold a note for a minute or more. Women were said to faint at the sound.

The principle was barbarically simple. If a boy, usually Italian, had a sweet soprano voice, his parents would convince themselves, or would be convinced by others, that there were huge profits to be made, and the child was emasculated before puberty. (My father was an admired boy soprano in New York at the turn of the century. I can only be glad that . . .) This operation kept the boy's voice from "breaking" while he acquired full adult growth—chest cavity, diaphragm, etc.

Castrati, many of whom did indeed become very wealthy, were sometimes mocked by men, particularly in caricatures as the male sopranos approached middle age and became grotesquely obese. Women mocked them much less and in fact were notably attracted to the younger ones. This may seem purely perverse until we remember, first, that they were mega-stars, like Michael Jackson (perhaps not too remote a comparison), and second, they were said to be fully capable of sexual activity except for insemination. Both partners could be pleasured without risk of pregnancy. If the woman wanted pregnancy, or at least the sensation of being seeded, she may have resorted to the method that is dramatized in **Farinelli** (Sony Pictures Classics).

Many other matters are treated in this film, but it certainly would never have been made if the authors, Andrée and Gérard Corbiau, hadn't concentrated on sex. Farinelli (1705-1782) was the greatest of the castrati, admired by the Mozarts, father and son, by Gluck and Handel. Farinelli, whose real name was Carlo Broschi, had an elder brother, Riccardo, a composer who wrote much for him. The Broschi brothers, according to this film, provided a lady of their choice—hers, too, of course—with double attendance. Riccardo lay alongside Carlo and his partner, watching, and after a certain point had been reached, Riccardo took over and provided seed. Well, at least musicians will find here a new meaning for the term trio.

Gérard Corbiau directed and doesn't let us doubt it for a moment. This Belgian, whose previous film *The Music Teacher* was somewhat stolid, here cuts loose with all the heat he can muster. Almost every shot is crowded with frenetic emotion or action. Sweating and imploration and fear and triumph, passion and disgust get sloshed across the screen in bucketsful. Apparently Corbiau was afraid that an eighteenth-century film about music might seem distant and cold, so he keeps pushing us into people's faces and bosoms, into the midst of crowds and of galloping steeds. (That sure sign of poetical strain—the riderless white horse—appears at one point.) The rococo settings and costumes also rush by dizzyingly. (Compare Nicholas Hytner's use of such materials in *The Madness of King George*—to fulfill, not to suffocate.)

By additional way of keeping things lively, Corbiau and his co-author (his wife) have jumbled the chronology. The film begins in Madrid in 1740, long after Farinelli's career had begun. King Philip kept him there for years at a huge salary, just to cheer royal melancholy. But the reason for the Spanish stay isn't given here, and we are flashed back, bounced around through series of episodes in Farinelli's life, including his beginnings, his dealings with Handel and of course his amours. All of these sequences are overheated and discomfiting, not so much with closeness of the characters as with director's worry that he may be boring us. So it bores a little.

Farinelli is played by Stefanio Dionisi, who is quite attractive as long as he keeps his mouth shut, a difficult thing to do in this role. His brother is done by Enrico Lo Verso, who was so touchingly reticent as the young policeman in *Stolen Children*. Here he boils and broils with the rest of them. Elsa Zylberstein, the enchanting Ethel of *Mina Tannenbaum*, has nothing much more to do here than be on the screen a lot, which is pleasant. Jeroen Krabbe plays a Handel unlike the storybooks, as he tries to recruit Farinelli for his London theater. Omero Antonutti, who has growled around in Taviani films, growls around here as Nicola Porpora, the composer who was Farinelli's singing teacher.

Farinelli's voice of course couldn't be

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Martha and I. *Czechoslovakia before the war; the Nazi intrusion into a loving marriage between a Jewish doctor and his German wife. Rich with sad remembrance. (Reviewed 3/13/95)* **Mina Tannenbaum.** *Another Jewish story—after the war in Paris. A graceful, lyrical, shadowed account of deep friendship between two girls growing up. (3/27/95)* **Once Were Warriors.** *Ghettoized Maori life in a New Zealand city. The patterns are familiar, but the specifics are revealing. Fine acting. (3/27/95)* **Through the Olive Trees.** *An Iranian director investigates the lives of a young couple who have been in a previous film of his. Delightfully quiet, charming. (3/20/95)*—**SK**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

left out, but how was Corbiau to include it? Mario Lanza could do a Woolworth Caruso, but who could come that close to Farinelli? Corbiau and his musical advisers hit on the idea of blending two voices, a soprano and a countertenor (a man—not emasculated—who sings alto). The two voices were combined digitally, and the result is slightly odd but pleasing. What it lacks is astonishing virtuosity. Pages of music exist that Farinelli sang, containing his elaborations on scores, and this double-voice doesn't even attempt them. There are some nice sustained notes and some unexceptional coloratura display, but nothing to make us swoon. So the musical core of the film is as weak as the biographical drama.

Atom Egoyan is a Canadian writer-director who was born in Egypt of Armenian parents. He has made four films up to now, which have created a stir, praised for their visual ingenuity and unusual character interplay. I saw two of them and was struck only by his struggle to get the qualities that he is supposed to have achieved.

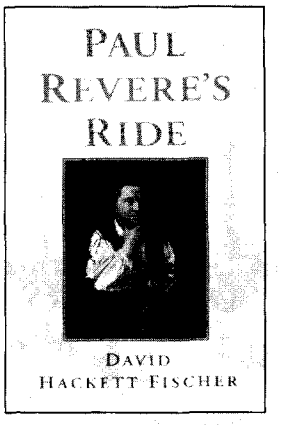
Now comes **Exotica** (Miramax), which, too, has been raved about. It's an odd experience. Here are some of the oddities. At the film's center is a leafily decorated strip club in Toronto. For $5 a girl who has done general stripping will come to a man's table and do personal gyrations, but if he touches her, he is thrown out. One of the girls used to baby-sit for one of her customers, whose daughter has been murdered. He touches the stripper and is ejected. The murdered girl's body was discovered by the M.C. of the club, who throws out the bereaved father.

That M.C. has impregnated the woman who owns the club and who inherited it from her mother. The bereaved father's current baby-sitter, though he has no child any longer, is his niece, the daughter of his brother who had been having an affair with his wife. The wife was killed in a car crash, which left her lover, the bereaved man's brother, crippled. There is also a gay owner of a pet store, who smuggles macaw eggs into Canada.

Somewhere behind all these elements (I've left out some) is a misty suggestion of a father-daughter theme, with intimations of fantasy and incest. There is also a contradiction. Egoyan is hailed for his visual acuity, but his dialogue is so sophomorically portentous and his pacing so torpid that all I could see before me were typewritten pages of the screenplay. Turning slowly.

However, all that Egoyan needs to do, apparently, to keep ascending in critical esteem is to keep on making films this way. I'm sure that doctoral dissertations on him are already in process and that at least one of them will published. •

NEW IN PAPERBACK!



Paul Revere's Ride
David Hackett Fischer

"A work of rare historical distinction, an unputdownable narrative....Offers a peerless portrait of its subject."—*The Boston Sunday Globe*

"A tale of adventure and intrigue so vivid and so colorful that it sometimes reads like a thriller....A richly elaborate account." —*The Los Angeles Times*

"Exciting....Fischer's details are meticulous, and provide an irresistible sense of immediacy." —*The New Yorker*

464 pp., 93 illus., $14.95

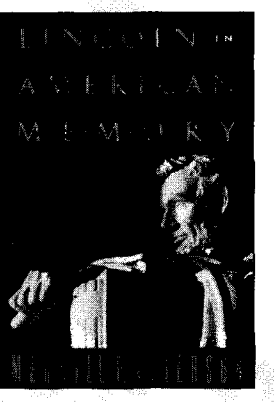
Lincoln in American Memory
Merrill D. Peterson

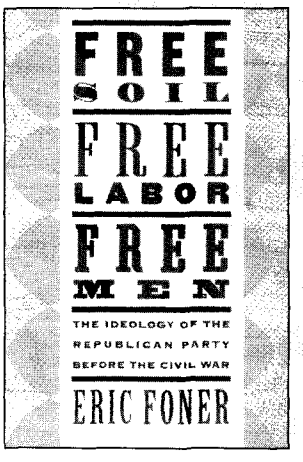
"Superb."—Jonathan Yardley, *The Washington Post*

"The best and most encyclopedic assessment of the vast Lincoln literature ever written....A work without parallel."—Mark E. Neely, Jr., author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Fate of Liberty*

"A masterful study."—*New York Newsday*

496 pp., 53 illus., $15.95





Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men
The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War
With a New Introductory Essay
Eric Foner

"A truly brilliant achievement."—Stanley M. Elkins, co-author of the Bancroft Prize-winning *The Age of Federalism*

"Impressive and persuasive....Useful and fair-minded."—*The New York Times Book Review*

384 pp., $13.95

Winner of the 1994 Robert G. Athearn Award from the Western History Association
Winner of the 1994 Theodore Saloutos Memorial Book Award from the Immigration History Society
Winner of the 1994 Pacific Coast Branch Book Award

Becoming Mexican American
Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945
George J. Sánchez

"Monumental....A consummate scholar and masterful storyteller, Sánchez rediscovers the missing threads and restores the vibrant colors in the fabric of Los Angeles."—*The Los Angeles Times* 400 pp., 11 illus., $15.95

At better bookstores everywhere. To charge call, 1-800-451-7556 (M-F, 9-5 EST)
OXFORD PAPERBACKS • OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Robert Brustein on Theater

Aspects of Love and Compassion

Barry Edelstein's production of **The Merchant of Venice** is the twenty-seventh entry in the Shakespeare Marathon. Reviewers are behaving like it's the 527th. Admittedly, Joe Papp's ambitious plan to stage the entire Shakespeare canon at the New York Public Theater was probably guaranteed to annoy critics and fatigue audiences. Indeed, the very concept of a marathon implies sweat and exhaustion, evoking images of *Chariots of Fire* sprinters falling face first onto the asphalt. If you think that recent Shakespeare productions at the Public have displayed more stamina than speed or grace, have patience. Papp's dream will be posthumously realized after only eleven more openings (twelve, if you count *Queen Alexandra and Murray*, the lost Shakespeare play which, according to Mel Brooks's 2000 Year Old Man, closed on the road in Egypt). Whatever the quality of individual productions, the completed series will be a fitting memorial to the grandiose ambitions of New York's scrappy happy warrior.

Too bad Papp is not alive to defend the current offering from the drubbing it has received in New York. I can offer only halfhearted support in his place. Edelstein's *Merchant* is intelligently conceived, imaginatively designed and beautifully costumed, and it features a galvanic, fearless performance by Ron Leibman in the part of Shylock. But revisiting the play so soon after Peter Sellars's Venice Beach version at the Goodman in Chicago, not to mention Peter Hall's stiff diorama with Dustin Hoffman, left me still awaiting a major interpretation of this play.

Sellars erred in turning the *Merchant* into a politically correct media blitz that obliterated the text. Edelstein's problem is the opposite: he has not sufficiently pulled the play out of literature. Still, his production does have some visual splendors. John Arnone's setting transforms the Anspacher Theater into a Venetian arcade by means of gray and red wooden beams, with the back wall functioning as a skyscape and seascape. He has also placed four trays of water on the stage to project rippling shadows over the cyclorama in the manner of Venetian water ceremonies. It is important to be reminded of how important water is both to the city of Venice and to the action of the play, whose plot leans so heavily on sunken ships and undelivered cargo. It is also helpful to see contemporary characters from seventeenth-century Italian painting—brigands, courtesans and banditti inspired by Tiepolo and Bertelli—brought to life in Catherine Zuber's handsome costumes, along with the black tricorns and exaggerated masks of *commedia dell'arte*.

And it is particularly satisfying to watch someone playing Shylock who feels no compulsion to placate the Anti-Defamation League. Since the nineteenth century, most actors have tried to exonerate Shakespeare's usurious and vindictive Jew by heightening his victimization (*vide* Morris Carnovsky) or his wounded dignity (*vide* George C. Scott). But although the mature Shakespeare was incapable of creating unmotivated evil (even Iago has his reasons for hating Othello), there is also much evidence that Shakespeare was trying to capitalize on the Jew-baiting of his time after the Queen's Jewish physician Lopez was executed on trumped-up charges of attempted poisoning.

Christopher Marlowe's Barabas in *The Jew of Malta*, who was probably a model for Shylock, begins with a lot more positive qualities. A considerably more radical and unconventional playwright than Shakespeare, Marlowe was able to fashion a character who, in comparison with the cynical Christians who plot his ruin, is almost a moral hero, until he lost control of his play after the first two acts and allowed Barabas to degenerate into a stock villain. Shakespeare's Shylock, on the other hand, though possessed of human touches throughout, is always a morbid threat to the established order, while his insistence on strict adherence to his bond is nothing less than a pretext for legalized murder.

Leibman throws himself into the role with the same sputtering energy he lavished on Roy Cohn in *Angels in America* and with an equal disregard for audience sympathy (which may be why he wins it). When he first appears, reminding us of Molière's Tartuffe, in a skull cap and black cloak with a yellow circle on it, he sits at a desk presiding over his scales, patting his chest with a prayer book. Employing a slight Yiddish inflection, with a tremulous voice that occasionally slips into soprano, he is a Shylock without redeeming qualities, which is why everyone feels compelled to spit upon his Jewish gabardine. Leibman spits a lot himself, mostly on his sibilants, impatiently tapping a plate on his line, "three thousand ducats, well," as if he were counting them. Leibman, moreover, is not very nice to his daughter Jessica. At one point he picks her up and hurls her against a wall, then locks her in a cage. So much for playing for audience sympathy.

But his affection for Jessica, as well as for his dead wife Leah, is never in question. After she escapes with Lorenzo, he presses her shoe against his breast and weeps. And Leibman makes us understand why this avaricious usurer shows such indifference to losing his loan to Antonio. For Shylock, the root of all evil is not love of money; it is love of revenge. After a ferocious trial scene, during which Shylock draws a yellow circle on Antonio's chest, marking the area where he will slice his pound of flesh, he is thrown to the floor, humiliated and stripped of his property. (Portia, who eulogizes the virtues of mercy, shows none herself.) Shylock leaves the courtroom, ripping off his own yellow badge in a final act of defiance, or perhaps obeisance, since he has been forcibly converted to Christianity. By pushing the limits of his character, Leibman manages to create a Shylock at once repellent and appealing.

The other actors are not quite so successful. Byron Jennings, looking remarkably like the English actor John Wood, strikes a note of dour depression as the melancholy Antonio that is appropriate but lacks development. Laila Robins would be an excellent Cordelia, and her pale beauty makes us understand why (apart from her inheritance) this middle-class matron is pursued by so many noble suitors. But her Portia lacks sufficient intellect, and sometimes seems as stiff as her teased hair. The two Gobbos are tiresome. And the homosexual lovemaking of Salerio and Solanio seems perfunctory, superimposed. (Sellars at least went all the way, making the Christian community almost entirely gay.) Lorenzo, competently played by Willis Sparks, remarks that "the man that hath no music in himself" suffers from a spirit motionless and dull as night. That's a fair description of this colorless production. It lacks the kind of music that makes the theater move and shine, the one exception being the barbaric yawp of Leibman's cacophonous arias.

I was even less enthusiastic about Terrence McNally's **Love! Valour! Compassion!**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

now playing at Broadway's Walter Kerr Theater. I avoided this play when it first appeared at the Manhattan Theater Club because although I have always liked the playwright, I hadn't been happy with his recent work and was reluctant to repeat negative opinions. But the acclaim for this one had become so clamorous that I had to abandon my good resolutions in order to battle a sense of critical irresponsibility.

Alas, I'm still disappointed in the direction of McNally's career, and for much the same reasons. *Love! Valour! Compassion!* is simply another example of what, in reviewing his *Lips Together, Teeth Apart*, I called Yuppie Realism, a genre that focuses "on upwardly mobile middle-class professionals, usually on vacation, in the act of exchanging witticisms while examining faulty relationships and compromised principles." Instead of being an advance in gay playwrighting, *Love! Valour! Compassion!* looks more like a regression to *Boys in the Band*. McNally is now stroking the gay audience in much the same way that Neil Simon used to pander to Jewish matinee ladies. There's obviously a lot of complacent consensual recognition between the spectators and the stage. What is lost is the penetrating particularity of the independent artist. The only thing that kept me sentient during this long evening was wondering about the exclamation marks in the title and why *Valour* was spelled with the British "u."

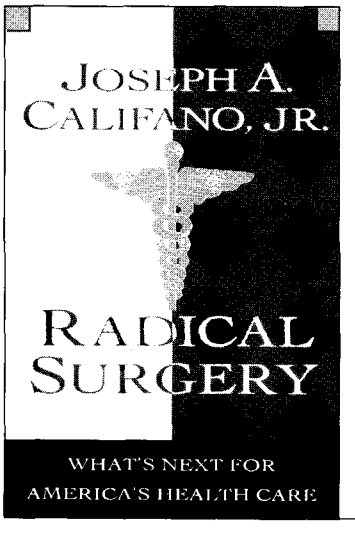
Love! Valour! Compassion! is less a play than a treatment for a T.V. series. It has everything required of a sitcom except a laugh track, and even this is provided by the live audience, which offers its Pavlovian response before an actor completes his line. Revolving around seven gay men vacationing at a house in Dutchess County on three summer holiday weekends, the play has no real subject other than sexual relationships—who is sleeping with whom, and how the who and the whom can be rearranged. Almost everyone in the play breathes the helium of high camp; virtually every action is the occasion for a smart remark.

The most explosive jokes of the evening belong to Nathan Lane, an irrepressible actor who should be forcibly repressed, and virtually all of them are based on references to show business. In the tradition of most McNally characters, Lane gets the laugh track spinning either by imagining unlikely Broadway revivals (a production of *The King and I* starring Tommy Tune and Elaine Stritch) or "outing" such unlikely people as Dan Rather and John Foster Dulles ("Ethel Merman was gay you know—so was Irving Berlin"), or invoking the recognition value of such favorites as Judy Garland and Glenda Jackson. Lane increases the decibel count to a painful level when he performs a version of the cancan, shouting "Eat your heart out, Donna McKechnie." At least the volume on your television set is controllable.

Except that they bear no resemblance whatever to recognizable human behavior, I don't have any fundamental objection to Broadway sitcoms, if that's what it takes to get people out of the house. McNally has a sharp edgy wit and he certainly knows how to feed bananas to hungry spectators. I probably wouldn't have found this evening so unappetizing were it not for the author's compulsion to shovel serious issues into the comic casing, in the manner of a butcher stuffing feed down the neck of a goose in order to enlarge its liver. It is manipulative to introduce such a painful reality as AIDS into a laugh-riot devoted to such artificial characters and events. Nathan Lane's HIV-positive Buzz Hauser stops camping just loud enough to plant a kiss on the lesion he has discovered on the breast of John Glover's AIDS-infected John Jeckyll, in much the same way that Sally in *Lips Together, Teeth Apart* stopped trading barbs for a moment to drink the water out of an AIDS-infected pool.

The major innovation of this play is that virtually everybody in it—and not just the muscled Latino youth (Randy

Revolutionizing medicine — new thinking for a new century.



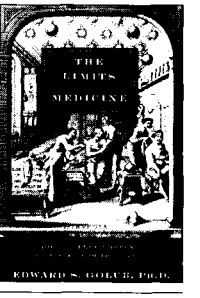
Radical Surgery
What's Next for America's Health Care
Joseph A. Califano, Jr.
Why we can't leave our health care system to politicians and insurance providers.

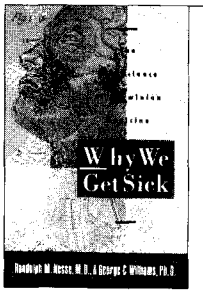
"Thought provoking...certain to stir controversy."
— *Publishers Weekly* (boxed, starred review)

"A clarion call for a cultural revolution in how we think about health."
— *Kirkus Reviews*

The Limits of Medicine
How Science Shapes Our Hope For The Cure
Edward S. Golub, Ph.D.

"Challenges us to ask whether the art and science of healing can be reintegrated as we enter the twenty-first century."
— Robert R. Rich, M.D., Baylor College of Medicine





Why We Get Sick
The New Theory of Darwinian Medicine
Randolph M. Nesse, M.D. & George C. Williams, Ph.D.

A groundbreaking theory of disease that **"could well revolutionize the way physicians are taught."**
— Professor Robert Ornstein, author of *The Psychology of Consciousness*

At bookstores now!

TIMES BOOKS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Becker) whom everybody lusts after—eventually gets to take his clothes off. I haven't seen so many pecs and peckers on stage since *Oh! Calcutta.* If that's your cup of tea, or piece of cheesecake, then you may find some value in *Love! Valour! Compassion!* One character, the dancer Gregory Mitchell who owns this weekend house, seems to have some human dimension and is nicely played by Stephen Bogardus. The others, cast with very good actors, will undoubtedly soon be joining the play in the electronic media. Not since *Hot 1 Baltimore* has the Broadway theater provided such a successful tryout venue for network T.V. •

The Face

BY ANNE HOLLANDER

Garbo by Barry Paris

(Knopf, 654 pp., $35)

It is significant that Garbo's appeal endures as much in her photographs as in her movies. Above everything, it was and is the Face, the first face made for the camera, the face that wants to be alone, that barely moves. The acting was mostly done with the eyes, into which the camera plunged again and again; the rare smile and the rarer laugh never obscured the inward look. She had fantasized about acting when she was a little girl, and she appeared in plays as part of her training at drama school, but a stage career would have been a disaster. It was the close-ups in movies and the portrait photographs that drew forth her real gift and made her immortal.

The voice, once it was heard in *Anna Christie,* was fortunately no hindrance. Her particular brand of foreign accent had no connotations whatsoever in America, neither good nor bad nor comic, and her speaking voice had a low timbre with a touch of hoarseness that went perfectly with the Face. Garbo's brand of Swedishness in general had a lot to do with her appeal, although not much was made of this. She had grown up in the working class of a self-contained liberal society, where her family was poor and life was harsh but not miserable, streets were safe, pleasures were simple and available. Having been obliged to leave school at 14 to go to work, she had never entirely grown out of her childhood attitudes and feelings. Her relatively stable background did not require desperate, self-creative escape.

In her later financial wrangles with her studio, it was clear that Garbo really did feel that she could happily leave the whole business to go and live by herself in a cabin in the woods; and it gave her great power. Other stars, deeply committed to the prestige of luxury and brilliant personal display, might talk like that for effect, but never mean it for a minute. What was often perceived as a pose, a strategic and deliberately provocative withdrawal on Garbo's part, was really a form of uncultivatedness, of plain simplicity—the same quality that always made her seem to be shrugging detachedly out of her luxurious costumes. She had a similarly schoolgirlish kind of self-discipline, always on time and well prepared, but quick to claim absolute freedom and privacy at the stroke of the bell.

And then there was the melancholy—more Swedishness, many thought, just look at the suicide rate—and the ambiguous eroticism that went with it, both tellingly communicated on film as in no other possible form of art. The melancholy seems to have reflected a lifelong tendency toward depression that only intensified after her adored father's death, which brought about the end of her formal education. The ambiguous sexuality must have begun right then, as part of an ambivalent identity, a wonderfully cinegenic inner dissatisfaction. She had been an unusually tall and ungainly child. Later in her career she turned this internalized awkwardness into a form of quasi-masculine grace, a propensity to feel better in pants that struck a thrilling modern note.

This flavor was unusual at the time, and it was subliminally conveyed in all her very feminine roles—nothing at all overt and depraved, in the Dietrich style. Garbo's body thus supported the effect of the Face, with its searching and receptive air. Its very lack of smug assurance is what drew so much feeling from auences. The one movie in which this compellingly uncertain bodily style was plainly ridiculous was *Grand Hotel,* in which she made a totally unconvincing ballet dancer.

Garbo seems to have hated crowds, strangers and observers all her life, but always to have loved both acting and being photographed. At a precocious 15 years old, she happily posed for the millinery ads printed for the department store where she sold hats, and also appeared in two short promotional films. That was in 1920. In 1922 she quit the store to make movies, and appeared in one undistinguished comedy. Fortunately, she was taken up by Mauritz Stiller only a short time later during her subsequent drama-school period, while she was trying to improve her chances in movies by acquiring acting technique on a scholarship to the Royal Dramatic Theater Academy. What she obviously needed was not more school but a new father, the one with a creative Patriarchal Gaze aimed at her through the lens. She put herself in Stiller's hands, but it was doubtful he ever touched her; in her case, his hands were his eyes. He took over her life, her clothes, her behavior as well as her acting. Although her famous first movie, *The Saga of Gösta Berling* of 1923, was the only one she ever made with Stiller, she was still following his precepts about how to be a movie star many years later, long after he had left Hollywood and other directors were fostering her exceptional cinematic qualities.

In his scrupulous and detailed biography, however, Barry Paris is at pains to emphasize that at this point, right after *Gösta* and right before Hollywood, Garbo came under the influence of another great director, G.W. Pabst, with whom she made *Joyless Street* in Berlin in 1925. She and Stiller were stuck in Berlin, penniless after a film project in Turkey had fallen through. Pabst gave Garbo a job in his movie so she and Stiller could survive until they went to Hollywood, where Louis B. Mayer had already seen *Gösta Berling* and had come to Berlin to sign the two of them on before the Turkish fiasco began.

Garbo's appearance in a Pabst film was thus a piece of pure chance, but Paris finds Pabst's influence even stronger than Stiller's on Garbo's actual screen acting. His part (and just at this moment, hers) in the flowering of German cinema in the 1920s was to help add an intense psychological dimension to filmmaking. An emphasis on authentic inwardness characterized the New Realism movement in all German art, following the externalized violence of Expressionism, and film proved its natural exponent. Paris points out, moreover,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that Pabst, like Freud, was not German but Austrian, and perhaps instinctively more apt at emotional nuance than German filmmakers—or even Swedish ones.

Paris's last book was a biography of Louise Brooks, the vivid and articulate star whom Pabst made famous in *Pandora's Box* in 1928. Paris uses telling quotes from Brooks's uninhibited writings throughout his new book, but especially in his essay on Garbo and Pabst. Brooks said:

> A truly great director such as G.W. Pabst holds the camera on the actor's eyes in every vital scene. He said, "The audience must see it in the actor's eyes."... Pabst's genius lay in getting to the heart of a person, banishing fear and releasing the clean impact of personality which jolts an audience to life.

Just so. Garbo responded very well to Pabst, who whispered and suggested where Stiller had commanded and bullied, and she produced the first example of the subtle "vulnerable despair" that later became her trademark. In *Gösta*, it had been her beauty alone that seemed remarkable; in *Joyless Street*, it was the impact of her personality that came through, as she played a serious girl helplessly compromised and maneuvered into prostitution by corrupt villains.

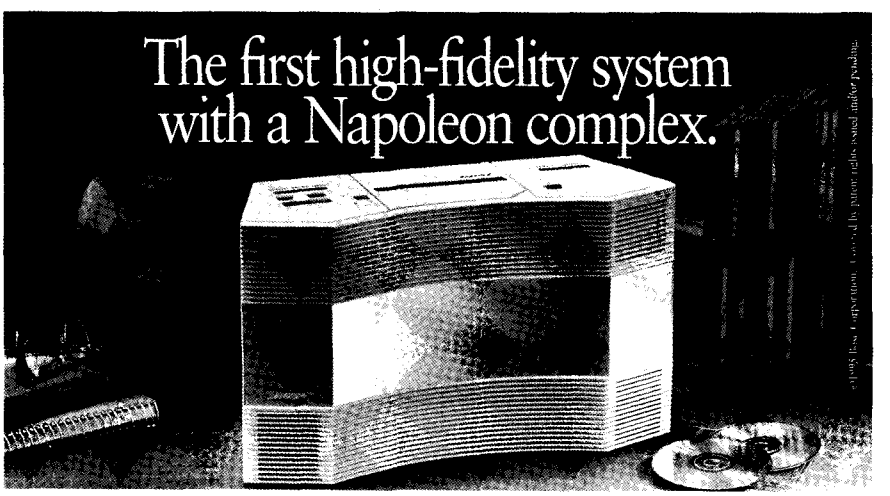
Once she settled in Hollywood, Garbo's life seemed to become mainly an ordeal, a constant effort to stay out of the game while winning it at the same time. Her spirits were further depressed by the early death of her sister and later by that of Stiller, which coincided with the breakup of her much-publicized but always less than idyllic romance with John Gilbert. Garbo's personal reclusiveness was backed up by an ordinary North European reticence not much valued by the new American movie industry, which was largely created by extroverted East European Jews. But she made personal friends, among them Salka Viertel, who ran a sort of elevated European salon in the middle of crude Hollywood. And she eventually developed strong female attachments, notably with Mercedes de Acosta, the famous, rich and aristocratic lesbian who by her own account knew everyone of importance in the first half of the twentieth century.

Paris is careful to say that the whole of Garbo's sex-life is a matter of gossip; and he shares the opinion of several people that she was not much interested in sex and may have "done" nothing. She certainly acknowledged nothing, in appropriate respectable fashion. Her extraordinary appeal to the public of both sexes was quickly established, however, especially after the success of *Flesh and the Devil*, her first film with Gilbert, in which they shared the first open-mouth kisses to appear on the screen. Despite her shyness and her solitary inclinations, her inspired screen acting made it possible for her to develop single-handedly a new Hollywood female character, that of the woman consumed by passion, the *grande amoureuse*.

Until Garbo, attractive women on the Hollywood screen had been wicked vamps or sweetly chaste wives and child-like virgins, with an occasional tempted matron or madcap heiress. The woman who risked everything for love—Anna Karenina, Christina of Sweden, Marguerite of the Camelias and numerous others—had to wait for Garbo. Most of the time the character had to die, although sometimes she had to make wrenching sacrifices other than the supreme one; but she was always a serious, intelligent and sympathetic character, felled only by the implacable force of her love. The vamp destroyed men, and laughed to see them grovel and suffer; Garbo's character brought about her own destruction, often wearing a faintly ironic smile.

Along with the enigmatic self-mocking face and the ambiguous body, Garbo had extremely expressive hands, which she used in movies as vessels of erotic feeling, especially autoerotic. It was said by several writers quoted in Paris's book that Garbo's love scenes take no real account of the man in them, of his feelings or even his individuality. She caresses him as if stroking her own passion, dwelling only on her own mounting desire, exploring the force of her own sexual feeling—perhaps complex, powerful and conflicted—and not of the man himself or his. One of her most extraordinary scenes occurs in *Queen Christina*, where she fixes the chamber of love in her memory by slowly caressing not the man but the room, fondling the mantelpiece and stroking the bedposts with a mesmerizing lust. Garbo, said one commentator, was in need less of leading men than of altar boys; and her own hands ministered to her own flame. Sometimes she would even play a love scene alone, with a prop or two. It was strong stuff to watch, much more potent than the submissive fluttering and possessive clutching deployed by all the vamps and virgins.

She was, and she still is, famous for self-absorption. Garbo ignored all wars, all politics and all the various wretched of the earth, right along with the irksome press and publicity people. She allegedly hated her lack of education and read widely on her own; but not newspapers, one would have to conclude. She was apparently devoid of racial or class prejudice, basically a non-snob; but the point was that all groups of



It may be small. But the Bose® Acoustic Wave® music system is definitely an overachiever. The unit holds a compact disc player (or cassette), AM/FM radio, and Bose's patented acoustic waveguide speaker technology. And produces a rich, natural sound quality comparable to audio systems costing thousands of dollars. We know, that's hard to believe. So we're ready to prove it. Call or write now for our complimentary guide to this award-winning system. Because, like the system itself, it is only available direct from Bose.

BOSE®
Better sound through research®

Name
Address
City State Zip

Call 1-800-898-BOSE, ext. W196.

Or mail to: Bose Corporation, The Mountain, Dept. CDD-W196, Framingham, MA 01701-9168.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

people were equally uninteresting to her, or equally threatening. Only individuals meant much, a few at a time: Stiller and Gilbert, Salka and Mercedes, Cecil Beaton, Gayelord Hauser and Stokowski; but also her nephew and her housekeeper, and much later on, helpful and comforting friends not fond of the public eye, nor insistent on unacceptable degrees of intimacy.

And she did find an exclusive Hollywood circle to join. It is hard now to imagine the character of the cultivated European colony that maintained itself in Hollywood during Garbo's active career. Movies began silent, and therefore international; and a great many talented and educated Europeans were helping to make movies in Hollywood in the '20s and '30s and before. Others settled there for a time, too, as friends and fellow artists—classical musicians such as Schoenberg and Stravinsky, writers such as Christopher Isherwood and Lion Feuchwanger. Later the tide of refugees swelled their numbers. Garbo quickly became part of what was called the "European ghetto," not always with good humor, by local American talent struggling for success and recognition in movies. Cinema was a serious artistic medium in Europe before movies became a serious entertainment industry in America. For two decades and more, Hollywood was struggling to match high European standards, and dealing with imported European practitioners, well before developing a distinctive product with its own unsurpassed brand of American excellence.

Garbo became our great movie star because our movies—I mean American movies—were somehow confirmed by her way of acting in them, just at a time when they were coming of age as the great expressive medium of the century. She obviously hated Hollywood the whole time she was there, and had very little respect for her own films, preferring her work in the German version of *Anna Christie*. But Hollywood had a real need of her. It was immensely important that the uniquely gifted Garbo stay in Hollywood, so as to be identified with the rising success of American movies, and not return to Europe, to an assured cinematic home in the old-world artistic mode. And so she commanded an immense salary and her choice of working conditions, and set a new standard for every aspect of modern American stardom.

Garbo's self-absorption and isolation worked marvelously on film—along with her indifference to public opinion, her acknowledged but muted sensuality, her strong will and inner life made cinematically manifest only in the tiniest shifts of expression and gesture, and in limited utterance. The whole combination produced the magnetic effect of someone at once vulnerable and unattainable. In the '40s and since, American movies went on to elevate and to idealize these qualities in American movie performers of either sex, in distinct contrast to the stage actor for whom constant projection is essential and utterance is primary. Gary Cooper and John Wayne partook of this ideal, besides a succession of American female stars such as Lauren Bacall and Bette Davis. Garbo was the first to embody it.

Paris's biography joins a host of Garbo books, several of them quite recent, but his turns out to be the only one we must have. Paris has taken full account of all the other works on Garbo, and registered their value as well as their differing brands of emotional bias while clearly sorting out his own feelings as he proceeds. Along the way, he soberly corrects many factual errors that mar the public sense of Garbo's life. The results make a comprehensive study, including careful essays on Garbo's character and personal relationships, her difficult-to-discover financial arrangements, her effect on individuals and on the public at different moments, her actual film performances and, most valuable, the exact circumstances of her long term as a living legend. He is very good on Garbo's shortcomings and bad behavior, both sympathetic and unsentimental. He has gone into the testimony of others in admirable depth (this book has more than 650 pages); and he has found quite a bit of new material—tapes, documents and a bunch of striking photographs from every period of Garbo's eighty-five-year-long life, both dumb snapshots and posed masterpieces.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

It is interesting to know, for example, that Garbo's retirement from the screen in 1940 was not sudden, a primadonna's colossal fit of pique after her first failure. New projects were being constantly considered by her and her studio during the next two decades, and several interesting collaborations were conceived that all eventually come to nothing, leaving only the stark fact that she made no movies at all after *Two-Faced Woman*, and that it had been a disaster. Paris examines all the later negotiations in detail and every single earlier element contributing to the failure of Garbo's last film—and indeed, if Paris's book has a fault, it is excessive thoroughness of speculation and investigation.

We should certainly welcome this biography as an exemplary work of reference. It sets all the Garbo records straight, provides a sane assessment of a collective hysterical phenomenon together with a fine historical study of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Garbo's life and times, and it is annotated, indexed and appendixed to the point of being encyclopedic. But I found it psychologically indigestible after all, perhaps because the subject has obsessed the author so intensely for so long that he has unconsciously rendered it burdensome even to a movie-lover and a Garbo-fancier. It is hard to feel the need to care so much about every mundane detail of this woman's private existence, especially during her last thirty years, when it had finally become clear that she would never work again. Her career had slowly sunk under the immense weight of her negative spirit, a cumulative force of refusal that eventually discouraged all hopeful planning and creative suggestion on the part of rising filmmakers who had her in mind.

For a while, Garbo's life was peripatetic in the manner of the modern idle rich, moving from islands to mountains to Paris, from yachts to chateaux. At length she came to a stop on East 52nd Street, and began to travel only around Manhattan, being spotted on foot in her big coat and straight gray hair. Her efforts to flee observation were as tireless as ever, while she apparently found the effort to have domestic repairs made and successful clothes-shopping done as difficult as career decisions had ever been. Near the end, Garbo spent a good deal of time in cozy intimacy with her housekeeper, who took care of her and her endless problems as a loving sister might have done. She died on Easter Sunday, April 15, 1990.

Garbo's beauty, talent and presence are undeniable forces in modern movie life, poetic life, visual and imaginative life. When all is said and done, however, her own life in the world was not so very interesting, neither as a historical passage nor as a personal trajectory. Her secretiveness made her life seem interesting to others, but in these pages Garbo gives the impression of boring herself: the transcripts from tapes of her phone calls during the last years are tedious, not piquant. She had magnetism, all right, and a telling way of displaying her soul and her sexuality, but not much wit or heart. Garbo herself might even agree that the important reality of her life was enacted in the pictures, moving or still, and those are perhaps all that the rest of us really need.

ANNE HOLLANDER is the author most recently of *Sex and Suits: The Evolution of Modern Dress* (Knopf).

Low Marx

BY TONY JUDT

The Wager of Lucien Goldmann: Tragedy, Dialectics, and a Hidden God by Mitchell Cohen

(Princeton University Press, 351 pp., $35)

Why should we study the forgotten ideas of dead men? The question is not an idle one. Those ideas, after all, are the primary subject matter of the discipline of intellectual history, a field under siege from many sides. Even if we agree that it is nonsense to assert that the ideas of dead men are unworthy of attention because they are the product of dead (or white, or straight) men, we cannot ignore the broader claim that it is not ideas but "cultures" that matter. In the latter view, the wider the historian's field of vision, the less he restricts himself to texts, and the better his chance of capturing a full understanding of the past, ideas included. And we cannot reject out of hand the suggestion that even texts of the past that matter in principle must have some claim upon the present to merit our attention.

Of course, many of the arguments against the history of ideas are owed to a modern solipsism, and a philistine lack of interest in learning. Still, they point to a genuine difficulty. Some texts *are* more equal than others; and if we are not clear why that is so, then we shall have difficulty in accounting for our choice of books to read or to teach or to write about. There are truly original or brilliant works, obviously, for which we can argue from conventional first principles: your life is fuller when you have read Aristotle, Montaigne, Kant. In other cases we might claim that the influence of a particular theorist was once so considerable that his work merits our attention, even though we no longer find it

OUT OF EGYPT

A Memoir

ANDRÉ ACIMAN

"Remarkable...magical and resonant...a mesmerizing portrait of a now-vanished world."
—Michiko Kakutani
The New York Times

"Beautifully remembered and even more beautifully written."
—Richard Eder, *Los Angeles Times Book Review / New York Newsday*

"Lovely...Mixes memory and imagination in seamless and beguiling ways."
—Jonathan Yardley
The Washington Post

At bookstores everywhere
FARRAR, STRAUS & GIROUX

NYLS

New York Law School Presents

On the 50th Anniversary
(1945-1995)

THE NUREMBERG TRIALS AND STATE ACCOUNTABILITY

Tuesday, April 4, 1995
9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

New York Law School
57 Worth Street
Manhattan

With Honorary Guest **Telford Taylor** and panelists Rwandan Ambassador **Manzi Bakuramatsu**, current war crimes prosecutor **Graham Blewitt** and others.

Seating is limited; for reservations call:
212/431-2112

Sponsored by New York Law School
Journal of Human Rights
and the Ernst C. Stiefel Fund

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

morally or logically compelling. On these grounds alone, there will always be a case for studying Marx. And there are the writers who addressed their own time but can now be heard speaking to us as well, for all their circumstantial limitations. Alexis de Tocqueville is such a writer.

And yet this is too easy. Nobody is likely to argue for the neglect of the genuinely great thinkers I have named. But what of those who wrote works that give even their biographers pause, whose ideas were derivative, whose influence was restricted or passing, who seem trapped in a mental world to which we have little or no access? Why should anyone go to the trouble of disinterring such persons, the more so when they are close enough to us for the reader to remember a time when their ideas were in circulation, and thus to have a reasonably good idea in advance of the outcome of the exercise? Is it not under such circumstances that the "contextualists" are the most persuasive—that the setting, and not the theory, remains interesting, that the proper question to be asked about certain theorists and their products is the strictly historical one: Why was he so influential in such a place and in such a time? Why did anybody once care?

These thoughts are prompted by Mitchell Cohen's study of Lucien Goldmann. Goldmann was a Romanian Jew who spent most of his adult life in Paris, where he held a university position until his death in 1970, when he was 57. Although he passed through the left-wing Zionist movement known as *Ha-Shomer ha-Tsair* (The Young Guard) in Romania in the '20s, and was a member of the Romanian Communist Party until 1935, Goldmann had no formal political affiliation thereafter. The limited influence that he exercised in certain left-wing circles during the last years of his life derived from his identification with what Perry Anderson once called "Western Marxism," the rather eclectic body of thought associated with the writings of Antonio Gramsci, George Lukacs and lesser acolytes.

The chief importance of those figures lay in the distance from official, Stalinist Marxism claimed for them by their admirers. "Western Marxism," of course, never actually existed. It was, and is, an imputed corpus. Most of the Western Marxists either despised the ideas of their putative colleagues or were quite unaware of them. What they really had in common was their *relative* intellectual unorthodoxy, and the consequent powerlessness of their position. Cast adrift from real revolutionary politics, or carefully marginalized by their communist colleagues, their influence was confined to the classrooms and the radical intelligentsia of Western Europe and North America. And very few of them made original contributions to the Marxist theory that remained their lifelong obsession.

So it was, certainly, with Lucien Goldmann. He earned his living as a sociologist of literature, though in the '60s he also passed as a philosopher and a cultural theorist. He wrote one well-known book, *The Hidden God: A Study of Tragic Vision in The Pensées of Pascal and The Tragedies of Racine*, which appeared in 1955 (and in English in 1964), and numerous essays. But what he really spent his life doing was commenting on the work of Lukacs. Goldmann discovered Lukacs at a young age and he remained critically captivated until his death. Inevitably, then, Cohen's book is at least as much about Lukacs as it is about Goldmann.

The difficulty with Lukacs is notorious. He is best known for the collection of essays published in 1923 as *History and Class Consciousness*, in which he sought to give the materialist Marxism of his time a strongly Hegelian and idealist cast. But hardly had the book appeared than Lukacs, a Hungarian Communist living in Soviet exile, was forced to abjure it and to cleave to the emerging Stalinist orthodoxy, which he did, with all the requisite humiliations, self-criticisms and about-turns, for most of the rest of his long life. Addressing Goldmann on the unwisdom of admiring Lukacs, Theodor Adorno warned that such admiration was difficult "because—as you know—he repudiates exactly those writings that you and I hold in high esteem, even though his prestige among progressive intellectuals rests solely on those very writings."

What "progressive intellectuals" like Goldmann admired in Lukacs was his use of dialectics. For proletarian revolution was not the product of an inevitable linear progression driven by changing relations of production. It was about overcoming "false" consciousness. In his own words, Lukacs was trying to out-Hegel Hegel:

> Only when a historical situation has arisen in which a class must understand society if it is to assert itself; only when the fact that a class understands itself means that it understands society as a whole, and when in consequence the class becomes both the subject and object of knowledge; in short, only when these conditions are all satisfied will the unity of theory and practice, the precondition of the revolutionary function of theory become possible.

The role of the revolutionary party is somewhat diminished in this account, and so the views of Lukacs as expressed in *History and Class Consciousness* became a gathering point for dissenting Marxists, especially those trying to find a humanist standpoint from which to face down the structuralist movement of the '60s.

This is where Goldmann comes in. His whole career is an extended footnote to the history of the influence of Lukacs. Goldmann's own claim, and it is Cohen's claim also, was that he improved and nuanced Lukacs in important respects. This is probably a fair judgment. In his last years Goldmann was skeptical about the prospects for proletarian revolution and was an admirer of the then-fashionable ideas of Serge Mallet and André Gorz, who thought that they discerned a new working class, with revolutionary potential, in the white-collar and managerial cadres of the second industrial revolution. (A new working class, but still a working class: these deviations no longer look as dramatic as they once did.) But Goldmann had already established his distance from Lukacs in his earlier, theoretical writings, where he had followed the master in his studies of literature (Lukacs was also the author of *Theory of the Novel*, an influential Marxist theory of literature) while trying to soften Lukacs's reductive and disembodied readings of novels, with their crude correlations between class-conflict and literary form.

Goldmann's own approach, and whatever was original in his writings, can be grouped under four headings. First, there is "transindividualism." This was Goldmann's attempt, drawing on Piaget as well as various Marxist sources, to avoid ignoring the role of the individual in history while still paying the proper respect to non-individual (and non-human) causality. The "transindividual subject" was not some conscious collective actor like class, but rather the way in which the collective acts through the individual, in what Goldmann called a "nonconscious" way. In his words, it is "the intellectual, affective, imaginary and practical structures of individual consciousness. The nonconscious is a creation of transindividual subjects and has, on the psychical plane, a status analogous to nervous or muscular structures on the physiological plane."

Then there was "genetic structuralism." This, too, is an attempt to soften the cruder explanatory tools of earlier Marxists while not leaving the field. Goldmann believed that there were "structures," in society and in history, but unlike the structuralists he saw

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

these structures as having a point of origin, a moment of non-structured formation. The role of human beings was to shape the structures which, in turn, shaped them. "Language, structures, relations of production are not subjects and never produce anything. It is men who, engaged in an ensemble of structured relations, with a structured consciousness and behavior structured as well, produce historical events." Genetic structuralism, in short, is simply "dialectics," as Cohen concedes toward the end of his book.

"Transindividualism" and "genetic structuralism" were at least terminologically distinctive, but "reification," Goldmann's third theme, was pure Lukacs. Both men were trying, at forty years' distance, to find a link between the "base" and the "superstructure" in Marxist thought, a way of explaining the manner in which social and cultural forms, apparently autonomous and distinctive, reflect the material conditions of their emergence. Reification—the fetishing of relations, things, desires and so on, which Hegelian-oriented Marxists saw as the characteristic of capitalist society—seemed to explain not only the dehumanized quality of modernity that Marxists attributed to an economic system, but also the difficulty of convincing others, the proletariat especially, of the need for change.

Goldmann's final trope, and his most original one, was the idea of the "wager," with the attendant concept of tragedy. From his study of Pascal and Kant among others, Goldmann concluded that the great thinkers of the past had been unable to escape the worldview of their era, either because they were trapped in an inability to transcend the moral "I" and conceive of the active "we" (this was Kant's predicament) or because there was a tension between their ideals and their world that they could only escape by wagering on an absolute (Pascal's dilemma). In both cases, Goldmann argued, these thinkers had reached the limits of their understanding, limits that were imposed upon them by their class or their material circumstances. They could resort only to internally coherent but unattainable abstractions. In Pascal, the defect comes from an insufficiently dialectical vision. In contrast to Descartes and the rationalists, the author of the *Pensées* did not try to break his world into comprehensible bits, but preferred to consider it in its totality; but he lacked a dialectical grasp of history, and so in his desire to make sense of that totality was obliged to fall back on a wager on God. That was Pascal's tragedy. A Marxist also wagers, but on the future.

The trouble with these notions and explanations is that they look fresh only when they are set against the generally low quality of conventional Marxist thought in those years. At least Goldmann was trying to say things differently, even if his approach added hardly anything to our understanding. By any other criteria, however, Goldmann's thinking is banal in the extreme. His reading of Pascal is extraordinarily thin, setting him up as an exponent of radical Jansenism and as the "nonconscious" spokesman for a frustrated class, the *noblesse de robe* of seventeenth-century France. Pascal was indeed very close to various of the dissenting groups within contemporary French Catholicism, including the monastic community at Port-Royal. Moreover the Jansenists, in their questioning of the interpretive monopoly of Papal authority, appealed to the frustrated mood of the administrative nobility in the years that saw the rise of the Bourbon monarchs. This, and the tensions between religious authority and secular knowledge that marked the era, are the subjects of Goldmann's inquiry, which is shaped and vitiated by his characteristically Marxist desire to link everything into a single explanatory chain.

Goldmann's interpretation of Racine is merely crude, with *Phèdre, Andromaque* and other plays slotted forcibly into pigeon-holes marked "moderate" Jansenism, "centrist" Jansenism and so forth. There *was* a "tragic vision," a turbulent uncertainty in seventeenth-century thought; as Donne wrote, "new philosophy calls all in doubt / ... / 'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone / All just supply and all relation." But in Goldmann's work this is reduced to a moment in the evolution of a social class, whose relation to a religious movement (Jansenism) and to two great writers is described as a series of "transindividual" correspondences: the link "between an ideological movement and the social group to which it corresponds."

This is no better than Lukacs, and we should not be surprised. In his work, *For a Sociology of the Novel*, which appeared in 1964, Goldmann proved unable to go beyond the master, and merely paraphrased him in impenetrable prose. The novel, Goldmann wrote, is a

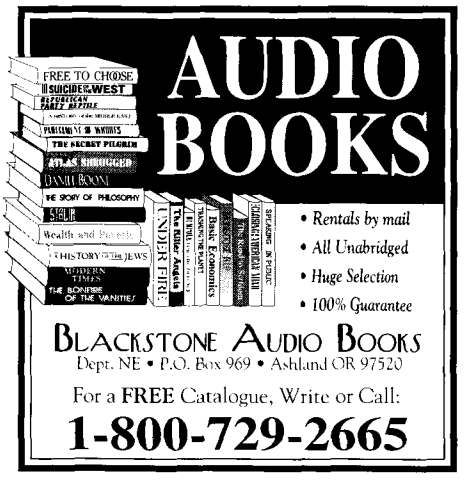
> story of a quest for authentic values in a degraded mode, in a degraded society, a degradation which, in as much as it concerns the hero, manifests itself primarily by *mediation*, the reduction of authentic values to the implicit level and their disappearance as manifest realities.

Some of the difficulty has to do with the sociological study of literature, an inherently suspect activity (according to Goldmann, "works are realist only to the extent that they reflect global historical evolution," a criterion offering infinite interpretive latitude). But a lot of the difficulty has to do with Marxism, which was always at its worst in cultural matters. Sartre said it best in a commentary on Lukacs:

> Valéry is a petit bourgeois intellectual, no doubt about it. But not every petit bourgeois intellectual is Valéry. The heuristic inadequacy of Marxism is contained in those sentences. Marxism lacks any hierarchy of mediations which would permit it to grasp the process which produces the person and his product inside a class and within a given society at a given historical moment. Characterizing Valéry as a petit bourgeois and his work as idealist, the Marxist will find in both alike only what he has put there.

It would be otiose to cite the many passages in which Goldmann resorts, despite his good intentions, to the most obscure "dialectics," all of them duly noted by Cohen. A single example will have to suffice:

> The constitutive structures of human behavior are not, in reality ... universal data



GOOD VIBRATIONS
Friendly, informative catalogs of sex toys, books & videos. $4, applied toward first order.
1210 Valencia #NR,
San Francisco, CA 94110

PUBLISH YOUR BOOK
At A Price You Can Afford!
$1.97 EACH
Size: 5½"x 8½", 64 pgs, 500 copies, 2-color cvr. Negs, Proofs, Perf Bd.
From $529. Write for Price List.
800-277-8960 PROFESSIONAL PRESS
P.O. Box 3581 • Chapel Hill, NC 27515-3581

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(*données*) but social facts born of past genesis, and in the process of undergoing transformations which outline a future evolution. Now, on the level of the *découpage* of the object, the internal dynamism of the structure is not only the result of its own dynamic contradictions, but of a much larger structure which embraces it and which tends itself towards its own equilibrium.

Nor is obscurantism the only problem. Although he scrupulously avoids phrases like "in the final analysis," with their echo of Engels and the materialist Marxism to which he was opposed, when all else failed, Goldmann was as crudely reductivist as the rest. "Authentic" societies, in his view, could produce authentic cultural artifacts, such as cathedrals. But the market reifies everything, which is why the nineteenth century produced only novels with troubled individual heroes. And so on. So many questions are begged by such an analysis of culture that the reader is left speechless.

Cohen thinks that Goldmann should be considered a philosopher of the human sciences, which is certainly how he saw himself. That Goldmann sought to avoid determinist theorems, and to balance choice and necessity in the explanation of human history, is clear. Whether he succeeded is another matter. His concept of the "wager" on the future is just a warmed-over version of Merleau-Ponty's argument in *Humanism and Terror* (1946), according to which the Soviet terror of the '30s might be defensible *post facto* if it could be seen to have served legitimate revolutionary goals (or merely saved the Soviet Union from Hitler by silencing his "objective allies" among Stalin's victims). Merleau-Ponty appeared to be justifying Stalin's show-trials in the name of hypothetical and unknown outcomes, a line of dialectical reasoning that exposed him to devastating criticism from Raymond Aron and others. Goldmann's deployment of the idea of a "historical bet" lacked the philosophical sophistication of Merleau-Ponty's troubling *jeu d'esprit*, and perhaps for this reason it aroused less hostile criticism.

As for Goldmann's attempt to think "totally," rather than separate things out in the manner of the despised Cartesians, it falls foul of the very strictures of which Lukacs himself warned. The dialectical method

> is concerned always with the same problem: knowledge of the historical process in its entirety. This means that "ideological" and "economic" problems lose their mutual exclusiveness and merge into one another. The history of a particular problem turns into the history of problems.

Replace "ideological" and "economic" with "cultural" and "social" in Lukacs's sentence and you have a sufficient account of the central defect of Goldmann's work.

It is hard to agree with Cohen in his generally positive appreciation of his subject. His book is scrupulous, scholarly and balanced. When Goldmann goes too far, Cohen concedes that his "extremely scholastic" homologies "may appear a bit too imaginative." He admits that Goldmann's glowing report on "workers' control" in Yugoslavia manages to avoid ever mentioning the Communist Party; and he is excellent on the "genetic structure" of Goldmann's own thought—the communitarian, romantic anti-capitalism he picked up in *Ha-Shomer*, his "secular religiosity," his faltering hunt for a "transindividual subject" to win his own wager, and so on. Still, the dice are loaded in Goldmann's favor, not least by the devotion of an entire book to his meager intellectual legacy. Cohen is remorselessly even-handed in his exposition of Goldmann's heavy-handed reasoning, rarely stopping to ask whether the effort is worth it.

It goes without saying, Cohen seems to think, that Goldmann's repetitive efforts merit our attention. This seems doubtful. Cohen's book, a heroic exercise in exegetical exhumation, is a monument to worthy but pointless scholarship. Its neo-scholastic qualities reflect those of its subject, as Cohen inadvertently concedes in his conclusion:

> Goldmann's thought, like Lukacs's, remains a whole. While it does not attain Lukacs's heights in *History and Class-consciousness*, it saves Lukacs from Lukacs, but only by revealing the problem of Lukacs's work—and, one might say, by making Lukacs something other than Lukacs.

This is unintentionally funny. Some might feel that the problem of Lukacs's work was pretty clear well before Goldmann came along, and that saving Lukacs from Lukacs is an exercise of peculiarly little interest to most of humanity, including most Marxists, and perhaps even to the late Dr. Lukacs himself.

Cohen's restricted focus also makes the book something of a lost opportunity, for there is here a broader subject to which one wishes he had addressed himself. Goldmann was obsessed with the problem of "authenticity." Like Lukacs, and like many of his own contemporaries, he thought that the preeminent problem of our times was how to reconcile true, unreified, unalienated "life" with the imperfect life that we actually lead. He read this problem back into Pascal and Racine, and proceeded from there to read it into the whole of modern history. He was not alone. "Marxist humanism" in the '60s and '70s amounted to little more than a reiterated obsession with precisely this conundrum. In this it was rediscovering, unbeknown to itself, and with Goldmann's help, an older romantic and reactionary preference for *Gemeinschaft* over *Gesellschaft*, for the German ideal of community over the Anglo-French ideal of civil society.

This distinction, and the preference for "authentic" community over "false" society, is a fascinating theme in the history of modern social thought. Why is the one authentic and the other false? Why is the vision of a fully integrated human existence, in which the space between the actual and the desirable has been abolished, such a source of fascination at certain moments? Could one not argue, if only from recent historical experience, that there is much to be said for inauthenticity, for imperfection, for a safe distance between the real and the "rational"? The terrors of authentic community are at least as real as the disappointments of reified commodity fetishism, though Goldmann, like many "rootless cosmopolitans" of his era, yearned for them notwithstanding.

But these are historical questions, and Mitchell Cohen, like Lucien Goldmann, is not a historian, which is a pity. If Cohen were a historian, he might have been more critical of Goldmann's own version of the past, where Kant represents the values of liberal capitalism (in eighteenth-century Prussia!) and seventeenth-century France is the scene of class struggle between the king and the administrative nobility. Cohen reminds us that in February 1969 Goldmann, having watched (and condemned) the Russian occupation of Prague, nevertheless defended the truth of his version of Marxism and its prospects for the future by quoting Galileo: *eppur si muove*, and yet it moves. But Galileo was asserting a truth about the universe in the face of pressure upon him to deny it. Goldmann was defending an error about the world and he was under no pressure to do so. It is a crucial distinction among dead thinkers that we would do well to have in mind as we study them.

TONY JUDT is Erich Maria Remarque Professor of European Studies at New York University.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Strangers in Paradise

By Nader Mousavizadeh

Borderliners
by Peter Høeg
translated by Barbara Haveland

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 277 pp., $22)

"With the knife of light they would scrape the darkness clean," observes the young narrator of *Borderliners*, who languishes in the private boarding school that is the setting for Peter Høeg's new novel. Barely a teenager, barely sane, he speaks of the zealotry of his superiors, of the cruelty of best intentions, with the weariness of an old man. Høeg's novel is the story of three children whose shattered lives merge at the center of an educational experiment that seeks to socialize the abandoned and the most alone—the story of the real consequences of an unimpeachably enlightened social policy. But the cause of these children is a lost cause. They want no part of a community that wants no part of them; and their unwillingness to abide by rules whose rewards they have never known sets the stage for a reckoning of quiet magnitude—between the child and the adult, between the unique and the uniform, between doubt and certainty.

The author of *Borderliners* is, of course, also the author of *Smilla's Sense of Snow*. *Smilla*, Høeg's third book, was his first to be translated into English, and introduced him as a brilliant and intriguing writer of thrillers. And so to his English readers, *Borderliners* appears as a departure, though in fact it was *Smilla* that was the detour for Høeg. His stories have generally relied for their power not on suspense, but on a more traditional and demanding standpoint for fiction: the standpoint of the stranger and the outsider. Høeg is a contemporary master of the outsider's perspective.

Høeg arrived on the Danish literary scene in 1988 with *Forestilling om det Tyvende Århundrede*, or *A Vision of the Twentieth Century*, which introduced a deeply original voice. With his second book *Fortællinger om Natten*, or *Night Stories*, he made clear that the raw originality of his first novel was in no way incompatible with writing of a more subtle and literary kind. Høeg has brought to modern Danish literature an intensity, a worldliness, a love of language and a depth of learning that entirely on their own have raised the standards for contemporary writing in Denmark (and throughout Scandinavia). In a country and a culture whose guiding principle, for good and for bad, is the common denominator, and whose celebration of the mediocre is almost religious, Høeg's voice has been a welcome disturbance. Throughout his career he has sought to alert his readers to the perils of complacency and rectitude, and to the rewards of a worldview that embraces nuance and prizes doubt. And those lessons are best learned, he avers, from the lives of those who do not belong.

A Vision of the Twentieth Century and *Night Stories*—neither of which has been translated into English—comprise the beginnings of a fractured literary evolution. Høeg's first book is perhaps best described as one long premonition, "a history," as he writes, "of the Danish dreams, an account of what we have feared and dreamt and hoped and expected of the twentieth century." Høeg recounts the last 450 years of Danish history through the lives of a dozen ordinary and extraordinary people. None of them is conventional, and yet they each embody or illustrate a salient aspect of the Danish experience—gradualism, peaceful accommodation, civic prosperity, the struggle for difference and distinction in a crushingly conformist culture.

It was not until Høeg published *Night Stories*, though, that it became apparent that the elan of his first book could be harnessed to a greater purpose. These stories are, in many ways, the finest moments of Høeg's writing. Their subject is, quite simply, "love and its conditions on the night of March 19, 1929." Høeg, of course, did not choose an arbitrary date for these stories. He chose the moment in the history of Denmark, and of Europe, when the descent into barbarism was still avoidable, when it could be imagined that Europe's past needn't be Europe's future. Still, Høeg manages to probe the period's resonances without letting its heavy symbolism overwhelm what remain, at heart, love stories. The love in these stories comes in many ages and kinds: between a city and its children, between a young avant garde artist and his provincial lover, between a physicist and her science, between two young dancers at the Royal Ballet in Copenhagen.

These "night stories" are all inquiries into the fate of love as a hostage to convention; and, as in *A Vision of the Twentieth Century*, their power derives from the way they unveil a crucial pillar of Danish culture or society: the fanaticism of the Royal Ballet, the worship of science and the protective instincts of the state, the adulation of convention and the ennui of a life of manners. Høeg illuminates the political and the cultural through the prism of small, intimate lives of no apparent consequence, simultaneously elevating and denigrating, mocking the grand and dignifying the petty. Little is left as it seemed.

In Høeg's first two books, so different in style and subject, a central figure did begin to emerge: the figure of the outsider. In *A Vision of the Twentieth Century*, Danish history is portrayed more often than not through the eyes of the gypsy, the artist, the circus clown. In *Night Stories*, Høeg tells more conventional tales, but their conventionality is often set in relief or foiled by the presence of a foreigner, a dissident, or, as in the story "Hommage à Bournonville," a club-footed boy. "I have learned something," says the narrator Jacob:

> "I have learned that it can be necessary to stand outside to see clearly.... I've also learned something else.... I've stopped feeling regret, I have seen the theater and the girl and Andreas without anger, as if I had been able to experience it all through the eyes of another human being, as if it were still possible to be inside."
>
> "Whose eyes," asked Rumi.
>
> "The clubfoot's," answered Jacob, "and at that moment I forgive them all."

The idea of gaining wisdom through pain, and knowledge through alienation, is hardly a new idea; but Høeg complicates it subtly by implying the tension between the emotional need for inclusion and the truth that is wrested from the absence of such acceptance. We may prefer the ignorance of approval to the wisdom of solitude, Høeg seems to be saying, but we do so at a cost to ourselves and to our world.

Nowhere has Høeg developed this theme more compellingly than in *Smilla's Sense of Snow*. In Smilla, a woman of part Danish, part Inuit descent, he has created a character of singular spirit

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and poise. With remarkable alacrity, she draws the reader in as an accomplice in her search for a young boy's killers and, ultimately, for a measure of restitution for an Inuit culture that has been direly wounded by Danish colonial rule. We follow Smilla from her first suspicions of deception through her confrontation with the Danish medical and scientific elite, as well as with more personal demons in the characters of her father and her lover. And all along we listen and argue and guide her in our minds, imagining that our indignation at the cruelties that she meets may prove her indignation stronger, more true, perhaps even heroic.

Høeg's great achievement in the creation of this character is that Smilla's struggles are never resolved clearly or complacently. We are left with an unsettling sense of the ineliminable unknown, with a confirmation of the fear that there are questions for which there are no answers and loves for which there are always conditions. As Smilla says at the end of the journey that has left her at the very edge of the arctic glacier, "Tell us, they'll say to me. So we will understand and be able to resolve things. They'll be mistaken. It's only the things you don't understand that you can resolve. There will be no resolution." And no forgiveness, Høeg seems to suggest, no reconciliation between the Inuit and the Dane, between the woman and the men, between Smilla and her demons.

There is in *Borderliners*, as well as in *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, an echo of Conrad's thought that we "live as we dream—alone." If Smilla's loneliness was that of an outsider breaking in, the loneliness of the children in Høeg's new book is that of outsiders on the inside breaking out. These children all seek to break out of the conformity and the social control of an all too well-meaning educational system. Their early lives have been shattered by the loss of their parents and their violent passage through orphanages, reform schools and asylums. Each of them has been abandoned, first by family and later by the state, and by the time they meet, they are bound to nothing but their own damaged souls. They are brought together at Biehl's Academy, a private boarding school whose headmaster, Biehl, acts with the fervor of a missionary among bewildered, malleable converts.

Peter, Katarina and August have been brought into Biehl's orbit as part of an experiment to socialize the wayward by means of strict control and unrelenting discipline. The novel begins as the children are trying their best to adapt to the rules of yet another institution. Soon, though, they begin to fall through those cracks whose existence Biehl's life is dedicated to fill. His is a Manichean world of good and evil, of light and darkness. He is a disciple of N.F.S. Grundtvig, the nineteenth-century Danish writer and philosopher of Christian hope, for whom education was a sacred

One Hundred Well-Cut Leaves

Please say more about the last night of your life.
How, alone on the giant white door of your hospital bed,
The exit through which you would leave forever,
You stretched out large as you could
Beneath the rubber web of life support and thought,

These are not tubes at all.
These are branches.
Each well-cut leaf a year of my life,
Falling like a gauntlet in autumn,
My body its infrangible trunk,
My hair a singed nest.
And my daughter, that tiny bird flown off
And eyeing me hungrily.

Because your wrists were tied,
Because your windpipe was burrowed into with sails of gauze,
Because you nodded yes so evenly to good and evil,
I became afraid, a dark jewelled excavation of fear.

It's terrible to think of the doctor
Pulling off those branches when you died,
The tap root through your throat and down into your lungs
Reappearing, inch by inch, like a fisherman's line
Reeled in empty.

Now as the trees in my backyard throw down their
Hundred well-cut leaves, I pick them up
And stroke their sharp edges,

Read their old braille skins, their veins which are older
Than human veins, their stems so much more visible
Than human stems.

You will never say more about your childhood,
Your parents, the poverty, the tenacity,
About chicken farms and cheese factories,
Selling leather goods off the back
Of a station wagon, playing cards in the Catskills.

More about the Navy, your courtship of my mother,
The brother you loved who fought in the Boxer Rebellion
And kept the gray photographs, a modest vault of evil,
Beneath the bed where he slept.

You'll never say more about the cycles of things,
The giant abstract cycles that stand so tall
We cannot see all of the edges at once.

VICKIE KARP

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

blessing to be visited on every man, woman and child, and for whom the journey from the darkness of superstition to the light of Christian faith and Enlightenment reason was one of divine ordination. Biehl, too, sees no nuances, no byways in the path from ignorance to enlightenment.

Peter, the narrator of the novel, at first finds a haven at Biehl's. But his sense of security is abruptly cut off when he discovers that here, too, he is viewed merely as a guinea-pig in a greater "plan." He soon finds an ally in the older Katarina, a fellow doubter, and together they begin to challenge the assumptions of a system whose intolerance of borderliners is matched only, in Høeg's metaphor, by the inflexibility of time itself. The dictatorship of the clock becomes a greater, even less forgiving expression of the cruel discipline to which these children are subjected.

Peter has arrived at the school after a series of harrowing experiences at other institutions, where he suffered beatings and near-rapes by male teachers. What he brings with him—all he brings with him—is a conviction that it is the rule of time, and the controls it imposes on the most intimate aspects of childhood, that is the source of all other evil in his little world. In a stunning image of time suspended, Peter describes to Katarina how he and a friend would swing from a tree overlooking a set of railroad tracks, and time it precisely so that they barely passed the engineer's window before the train swept by. In that moment, when meeting the engineer's shell-shocked eyes, they made time stand still, "touched it" as Katarina later says. Ordinary time, a "barbed wire," is simply too painful—too slow for the days and weeks of horror, too fast for the fleeting moments of lightness and tranquility:

> I know I cannot bring anyone to understand this. How our lives back then were totally saturated by time.... I believe we were as far out as anyone can go with time. We were held down as tightly as anyone can be held down by a clock. So hard, in fact, that if your shell was not very thick, then you fell completely or partially to pieces. I have felt that time ran in our veins like blood.

To this tortured bildungsroman, Høeg cannot resist adding the vulnerable figure of an abandoned boy, as he did with Smilla's young friend Isaiah, whose murder sparks her search for restitution, and with the club-footed boy in "Hommage à Bournonville." Here the boy is August, a 9-year-old whose primal act of sin was to murder his parents with a shotgun blast from the cupboard drawer in which they kept him. An autistic, psychotic child, he is, as Katarina realizes, chaos itself in Biehl's world of Grundtvigian lucidity. The search for the school's purpose with August leads the three children through a maze of deceptions—both educational and personal—to a violent denouement whose resolution is as empty as it is tragic.

This senselessness is nowhere more apparent than when the children capture Biehl and he pleads with them not for his life but for his cause:

> "We wanted to help," he said. "Not just the children of the light. We wanted to carry the rest of you along with us. From the halls of the dead to the land of the living." ...
>
> "What about the darkness inside people," said Katarina.
>
> "The light will disperse it," said Biehl.
>
> August brought his face right down to Biehl's ear. They looked like two people exchanging confidences.
>
> "There's not that much light in the whole world," he whispered.

August's nihilism, premature as it may seem, is not ironic or intellectual; it is the lived nihilism of one for whom there never really was any hope. His hopelessness is authentic. It is, in fact, not nihilism at all, but a kind of bleak realism, in its insistence that there is a darkness which cannot be banished, a place in which no light, no human effort can survive; and this is the realism that has been central to much of Scandinavian art, from Strindberg to Munch and even to Bergman. Høeg is writing in, and brilliantly extending, a tradition. His novel is a coming-of-age story, but in his hands the coming-of-age story is the story of a loss of humanity.

Unfortunately there is more than this story in Høeg's novel. *Borderliners* is marred by the presence within itself of two other stories—a philosophical exploration of the nature of time and a jarring set of first-person references to Høeg in his study with his infant daughter. A passage recounting the events at Biehl's school is followed immediately by a reference to the science of time or to Kant's musings on the Milky Way. And somewhat more sparsely, the narrative is interrupted by what appear to be diary entries: "This is the laboratory. It is next to the bedroom, where the child and woman are sleeping. I am afraid.... Order. When the child was about 1 year old she started talking. At first it was just single words, but pretty soon they formed into strings. Into lists."

The problem is evident from the very first sentence of the book: "What is time?" This is already a betrayal of Høeg's narrative gifts. He seems insecure about the capacity of the novel, as if philosophical notions can be developed only in philosophical forms. The power of *Smilla* was that her convictions seemed completely believable as expressed in her person. In *Borderliners*, ideas are announced rather than embodied, and so they often seem pompous and even banal.

Høeg's meditations are also not helped by a translation that is only competent and rarely elegant. Ironically, the translation succeeds most in these analytical passages, where the language is more familiar and its resonances less important. The translator most fails Høeg when he is at his most lyrical, as in this passage when Peter discovers Katarina's closeness as an epiphany of belonging:

> We sat there and I knew that this was how it felt to be totally accepted. You sit close to another person and are understood and nothing is judged and you are indispensable.

In Danish, the fullness of the relief of this moment is expressed by the words "*og man kan ikke undværes*," for "and you are indispensable," which in English sounds rather like something said about a manual or a servant. What it really means is that you cannot be lived without. Wooden as this formulation may be, it evokes the need rather than demeans it. A little less fidelity on the part of the translator would have better conveyed the depth of the bond that is the subject of the passage, the bond that is all that stands between the boy and the abyss.

With *Borderliners*, Høeg has mounted a courageous assault on the compulsive conformity and the shallow inclusiveness of the Danish experiment. He has singled out an essential feature of a society whose successes have blinded it to its soullessness. Its crimes are largely not those of omission—poorly funded schools, single mothers left to fend for themselves, and inner cities in Dickensian decay—but crimes of commission, such as the intrusion into the sacred, the invasion of the private and the failure to abide or to honor difference. This is, to be sure, the darker side of an otherwise remarkable achievement in fairness and equality; but still it is a story that long has needed telling. For the cultural price of such material equality has been a stifling, almost suffocating sense of ennui. And no contemporary writer has done more to liberate Danish culture from its ennui than Peter Høeg. •

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WASHINGTON DIARIST

Good cops, bad cops

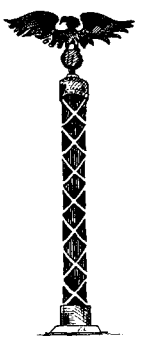
AS RECENT EDITIONS OF TNR have shown, this page has become the forum for editors to reveal both their T.V.-watching habits and, where applicable, a certain proprietary pride in their new spouses. So, killing two birds with one stone, let me report that if you ever want to find me and my fiancée at 11:30 on a weeknight, we'll be curled up in front of Fox 5, gazing at "Cops." To our love-crazed minds, the Murdoch channel's low-overhead, high-action reality serial is must-see T.V.

I ORIGINALLY CONCEIVED OF watching "Cops" as a method of familiarizing my European-born wife-to-be with the diverse regional dialects, urban demography and social problems of her new homeland. Some things she'll never figure out, such as why we Americans interrupt the show with a "bleep" tone every time someone says one of the words she's heard me shriek at my Master Card statement a million times. But for the most part, "Cops" is a marvelous acculturation tool. A recent special from New Orleans provided the occasion for a lesson on such topics as Mardi Gras beads, jazz funerals, oysters and Dixie Longnecks. Plus, we got to know the proper procedure to follow if you're ever caught between two brawling Louisiana drunks while mounted on a police horse. Thanks to the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, my intended spouse now knows *(a)* that it is not impolite in California to address someone you don't know as "guy" and *(b)* that "dude" is also acceptable. She knows that any guy, or any dude, who offers to sell "head" to a deputy posing as an out-of-town businessman will soon find himself getting booked—not for solicitation of decapitation-for-hire, but for solicitation of homosexual prostitution. New York's finest have taught her that a "perp" is neither a skin problem nor the vulgar sound one emits after eating too many dill pickles. It's what you call the guy who perpetrated a felony—or "crime," as you Letterman-watchers would call it.

THE MEN AND WOMEN OF LAW ENforcement have helped cement our relationship. "Cops" is thirty minutes of guaranteed quality time we can share every night (and an hour on Saturdays). My soon-to-be betrothed knows that I would never let her languish in the bathroom past the commercial break, even if she's brushing her teeth with the water running so loud that it drowns out the set. Faithfully, I cry out to her: "Hoooneeeeyyy, they're on a stabbing call!" And up the stairs to the living room she bounds, flecks of Colgate still trickling from the corners of her mouth. "Is that the dude who got sliced?" she asks. Then, recoiling at the on-screen gore, she gasps: "*Mein Gott!* That perp must have had a monster blade!"

"COPS" IS NOT FOR THE SQUEAMish. Nor is it for the attentionally challenged. Like marriage itself, it takes work. The more time you spend with "Cops," the more you get out of it. Its dramatic impact and its social scientific value are cumulative. Night after night, domestic disturbance after domestic disturbance, shooting call after shooting call, in Little Rock, Sacramento, Kansas City, Cleveland, Nashville, Miami, San Diego County—all across this great land of ours, crime and violence are an integral part of life for thousands and thousands of people. As you watch the cops try to deal with these perps, and sort out their chaotic lives so seamlessly interwoven with acts of random feloniousness, a few simple, obvious, but underappreciated facts about crime begin to take shape. The first is the sheer mundanity of what cops do most of the time. The *reductio ad absurdum* was the recent "Confused Woman Call" in Minneapolis. Seems that a little old lady summoned the police because she found herself stuck downtown with no money for a bus or taxi. Gosh, was she cute. So, cameras rolling, the officers politely drove her home. The second fact is that most of the mayhem is committed by people against their own "friends" and families. More often than not, good old-fashioned alcohol, rather than cocaine, is the catalyst for the wife-battering and kid-neglecting. "Cops" makes a devastating, if unstated, case for Prohibition. The show also suggests that most acts we call crimes are committed by people with no ability to weigh intelligently the deterrent effect of the increasingly harsh punishments so in vogue these days.

THE COPS OF "COPS" MUST THEREfore double as social workers. That, in turn, leads to their most interesting role: as amateur philosophers. The best part of the show is the minute or two in which officers try to explain what attracted them to the job, what keeps them motivated as they make their Sisyphean rounds, and why, in their opinion, the perps do the perpy things they do. On Murdoch's air, the men and women of law enforcement become moralizing color commentators, reporting to us from the fifty-yard line of America's tournament of violence. There is refreshingly little overt, or even veiled, racism in their ruminations; perhaps the fact that so many of the drunken sickos on "Cops" are white offsets the fact that a disproportionate number are young, male and black. Or perhaps we're watching only the best-behaved and highest-minded officers each department has to offer. No police chief in his right mind would send a T.V. crew out with the local Stacey Koon.



Sometimes, too, words fail our heroes, usually when they are confronted with a case that is simply too bizarre for moral understanding. I am thinking of the house full of haggard toluene-sniffers that officers stumbled upon in Kansas City a few shows ago. (Toluene, a paint thinner, costs a few dollars per gallon and provides a cheap, highly addictive high.) When something like that happens, even seasoned cops seek solace and explanation in the all-purpose credo of their vocation: "Must be a full moon tonight."

THE MEN AND WOMEN OF LAW ENforcement want to help, they really do. But the system and the crooks and, very often, the complainants themselves just make it so damn difficult. Take this lady in Cleveland the other night. Her domestic disturbance call sent two cops on a scary rooftop chase for the repeat-offender boyfriend she said was beating her once again. But when they finally wrestled the guy to the ground, cuffed him and presented him to her for a positive I.D., she chickened out and declined to press charges. "I just wanted him to give me back the house keys," she muttered. Even more upsetting was the black cop in South Central L.A. who helped capture a gun-wielding drug dealer, only to be besieged by angry black neighbors complaining that he and his colleagues had been too rough on the suspect. It was agony to watch that young officer as he drove from the scene, trying to get the camera to understand what it's like to be reviled as an Uncle Tom by the people he believes he is protecting. Hard as that was for him, it was no easier for me to decipher the situation for my future wife. I think she is still struggling to understand how the same racial and criminal madness that provides Americans with a source of national shame can also provide us with a source of cheap late-night entertainment.

CHARLES LANE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

A Citizen's Guide

Goals 2000 is the most significant piece of education legislation we've had, but there are signs it's in trouble. The most obvious is the effort by some members of Congress to take back over 40 percent of its funding for this year. But the general confusion about what Goals 2000 means and how it will work may be a bigger problem. *Does* it call for a federal takeover of the state and local responsibility for education? That's what parents and other community members are hearing. They're also hearing that Goals 2000 will force schools to adopt fuzzy, feel-good standards for promotion and graduation—like some of the outcomes-based standards that have outraged so many people. This is nonsense, but a lot of it is going around, and it cuts off discussion about some real problems with Goals 2000. So we are fortunate to have Diane Ravitch's new book *National Standards in American Education: A Citizen's Guide* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1995). As the title indicates, Ravitch does not limit herself to Goals 2000. But she provides an essential perspective for understanding the legislation and what we have to do to make it work.

Ravitch puts the movement for standards squarely in the context of American education.

Ravitch puts the movement for standards squarely in the context of American education. As she points out, there is a paradox at the heart of our education system. We have many of the external signs of a coherent system. Schools all over the country have the same kind of school day and school year. Individual classrooms are set up in the same way. And the students read from the same texts and are taught by teachers who mostly use the same chalk-and-talk methods.

But the uniformity of our system hides, as Ravitch says, the fact that we have no agreement about the "*educational* purposes" of our schools. Unlike the successful education systems of other industrialized democracies, we have not decided what math topics fourth graders should learn or what competency in writing to require of graduating seniors; we have no national consensus about what students are supposed to know and be able to do. And until the standards movement, we had no idea how we might try to create such a consensus.

One result of not knowing what our education system should produce is that we have difficulty fixing problems in the system—or even diagnosing them. Ravitch speaks about how the "lack of clarity about the purpose of schooling leaves the educational enterprise vulnerable to transient trends as well as to interest groups...." In other words, we grab every new fad that presents itself as a cure-all—like market schools, EAI-style privatization and charter schools. And equally disastrously, we bow to whatever group turns on the pressure. If we had clear and agreed-on *academic* standards, would we even consider the demands of full inclusionists that all children with disabilities be educated in regular classrooms regardless of the nature and severity of their disabilities?

All our students would benefit from a system with high and clearly defined academic standards, but, as Ravitch points out, it is especially important for poor children. In a system without standards, they often go to schools where little or nothing is expected of them. This is unacceptable, and in addition to being a way of raising student performance levels, Ravitch sees standards as a tool for achieving equity.

Ravitch misses one very important piece, without which standards will never work. I'm talking about stakes. Standards provide a way of connecting the entire education system. If you decide what kids should know and be able to do, you also know what must be in your curriculum and textbooks and tests and teacher education programs. But none of this will make any difference if there are no incentives for students—if doing well in school is not connected with something kids want, like getting into college or getting a decent job. Systems in other countries recognize this. Ravitch does not. Neither does Goals 2000—and this is a serious failing.

Ravitch's comments on the position of colleges in the standards debate are also somewhat off the mark. She speaks about the importance of colleges' developing higher standards but fails to recognize that it is not in their interest to do so. They are in a bidding war for students, and schools that raise their standards risk losing students. Unless the government helps by insisting that students meet certain standards in order to qualify for government grants and loans, it will be hard for colleges to play the part they must in making higher K-12 standards stick.

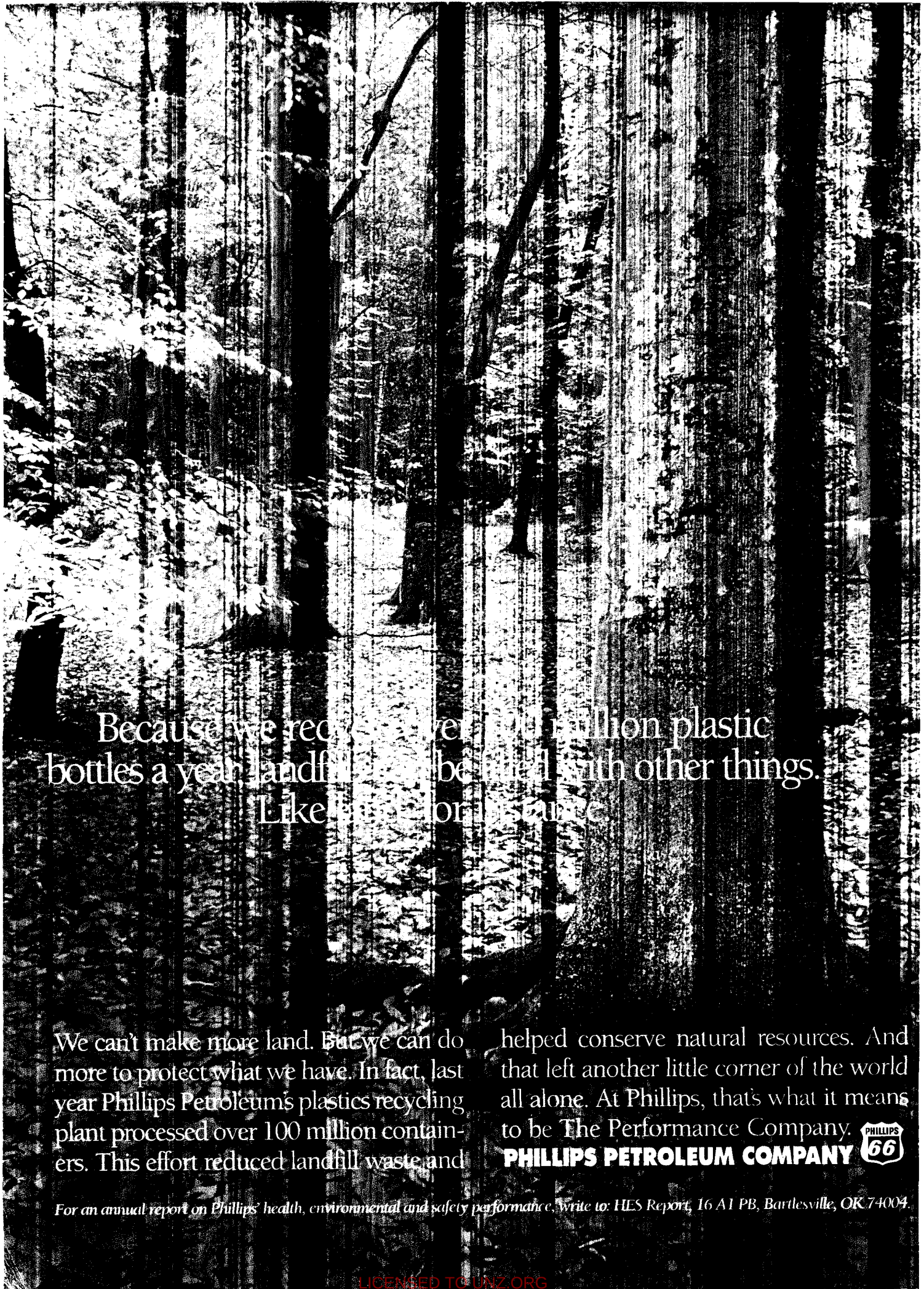
As Ravitch points out, Goals 2000 is very much a work in progress. Its future—and, indeed, the future of the movement for high education standards— depends on the quality of the debate about Goals 2000. Her book is an important contribution to that debate.

To order *National Standards in American Education*, send $25.45 to the Brookings Institution, P.O. Box 029, Washington, DC 20042.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1995 by Albert Shanker.

ADVERTISEMENT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



We can't make more land. But we can do more to protect what we have. In fact, last year Phillips Petroleum's plastics recycling plant processed over 100 million containers. This effort reduced landfill waste and helped conserve natural resources. And that left another little corner of the world all alone. At Phillips, that's what it means to be The Performance Company.

PHILLIPS PETROLEUM COMPANY PHILLIPS 66

For an annual report on Phillips' health, environmental and safety performance, write to: HES Report, 16 A1 PB, Bartlesville, OK 74004.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED